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Chris Gregory

Preview

The music, dance, theatre, art and crafts of India will be on show throughout Britain in a festival which opens next week. Today's Preview, the 16-page arts and entertainment guide published each Friday with *The Times*, gives the highlights of the festival's opening events, in addition to full details of the week's films, plays, concerts, exhibitions, broadcasting, sport and family outings.

Liberals and SDP agree more seats

The Liberals and Social Democrats have agreed an almost equal division between them of two-thirds of Britain's parliamentary seats to be contested at the next general election. They are confident of reaching agreement on a majority of the remainder by the end of the month.

Journalists killed in El Salvador

Four Dutch journalists were killed in El Salvador, the Dutch embassy in San Salvador said. Unconfirmed reports said they died during fighting in a village 70 miles north of the capital.

Prosser jury out

The jury trying three prison officers accused of the murder of Mr Barry Prosser at Wymondley Green Prison went to a hotel for the night after a six-hour retirement without reaching agreement at Leicester Crown Court.

Platt group fails

A receiver has been called in at Stone-Platt, the big textile machinery manufacturer, despite rescue attempts by the Bank of England. The company has led to a crisis between the company's bankers and City institutions.

Polar escape

The British Transpolar Expedition explorers have escaped from an ice floe 375 miles from the North Pole by driving their snow vehicle on to another ice floe which drifted alongside.

Private loans up

A steady increase in loans to the private sector is revealed in figures released by the Bank of England. Public sector lending was contracting.

Cable TV worry

Mr William Whitelaw, Home Secretary, is to set up an inquiry into the impact of cable and satellite broadcasting on television standards. It is feared that standards will fall.

Penlee inquest

The Penlee disaster inquest, which opened in Penzance was told of the drama of the three captains involved, the coater master, the helicopter pilot and the lifeboat coxswain.

Shinwell drops Labour whip



Lord Shinwell, aged 97, who has resigned the Labour Whip. (Back page)

Spectator dies

A 22-year-old Indian died after being punched on the head during the one-day cricket match in Durban on Wednesday between South Africa and the touring English XI. Police said they had questioned and later released a white man.

Cricket, page 17

Letters: page 11

On European defence, from Dr Robert McGeehan, and others: clergy morale, from the Bishop of Oxford

Leading articles: Chief constables: Haughey in Washington; Russia and India

Obituary, page 12

Mr Charles Feife

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Death penalty and flogging are rejected by Government

By Hugh Noyes and Anthony Bevins

The controversy over the maintenance of law and order in the face of a rise in violent crime overshadowed all other issues, including that of unemployment, in heated Commons exchanges yesterday.

Mr Whitelaw and Mr Patrick Mayhew, Minister of State at the Home Office, made it clear to their backbenchers that while they viewed the rising crime figures with the greatest seriousness, there was no possibility of the reintroduction of either the death penalty or of corporal punishment. Mrs Thatcher also told the House that she did not believe that corporal punishment would be reintroduced.

At the same time, the Home Office made a surprise announcement that Sir David McNeeney would retire as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police on October 1.

Though the Government do not intend to support some of the harsher penalties for offenders being suggested on the right of the Conservative Party, it is expected to give its backing to the introduction of curfew orders for young offenders between the ages of 10 and 21.

A new clause to the Criminal Justice Bill is likely to give courts the power to order house arrests for specified periods between 6pm and 6am on weekdays and from noon on Saturday and Sunday.

With opposition to the Government's stance continuing on the Tory backbenches, Cabinet Ministers intend to assemble all possible support for Mr Whitelaw in the coming week's debate within the party on law and order.

Mrs Thatcher and Mr Whitelaw battled through an hour of questioning, and MPs on both sides of the House left the Government in no doubt that this issue has, for the moment at least, taken over the political agenda.

Mr Whitelaw and Mrs Thatcher came to the House well armed to deal with almost any statistic. Almost too well armed in the case of the Prime Minister, who was so buried beneath departmental briefings on crime statistics that she completely lost her way at one point as the arguments deteriorated into exchanges over whether criminals thrived better under a Labour or a Conservative government.

Mrs Thatcher, Mr Whitelaw and Mr Patrick Mayhew, Minister of State at the Home Office, between them made clear to their backbenchers that while they viewed the rising crime figures with the greatest seriousness, there was no possibility of the reintroduction of either the death penalty or of corporal punishment. It was pointed out, however, that there would be opportunities in the near future for a vote on both these issues.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) promptly put out a statement saying that it stood by its opinion that the dispute should go to arbitration, but was nevertheless prepared to meet another Burnham meeting in the hope of persuading its management colleagues to accept arbitration.

McNee to retire as police chief



Sir David McNee, whose decision to retire came as a surprise to most of Scotland Yard yesterday. Offered another two years' service by the Home Secretary Sir David told him some weeks ago he would leave this October.

To appeals for new measures to combat the rising level of violent crime, Mr Whitelaw reminded MPs that the Criminal Justice Bill now before the House would provide magistrates and judges with a wide range of penalties. He was also hoping to bring forward proposals which would implement some parts of the plan on police powers.

But Mr Whitelaw was not encouraging in his reply to suggestions from the Labour benches for more community policing. That sort of talk, he said, was "bedevilling" the police system. What was wanted was effective policing, which meant harnessing the support, encouragement and help of the local community.

He accepted that the increase in burglaries and street crime was serious, but he was not convinced that the police and the Government but by the whole of the community. It was only by a concerted effort that the battle against crime could be won.

Mr Whitelaw agreed with Mr Roy Hattersley, Opposition spokesman on Home Affairs, that the best way to reduce the crime rate was not to have wild talk about more violent punishment, but to get the police out on the streets and the people. This was a matter for the community as a whole: there were problems of parental discipline, discipline in schools and many other matters that contributed to rising crime.

The Home Secretary backed the Metropolitan Police for their break-down of crime statistics into ethnic groups. He knew in advance that this was to be done.

The Cabinet is preparing to publish all possible support for the Home Secretary in the coming week's Conservative Party debate on law and order. Senior ministers were saying last night that the issue should not be turned into a political football, the Labour benches were keen to see the improvement of the figures, but that there were no simple answers.

Such arguments will only serve to isolate the Conservative right-wing, which has been demanding draconian measures, including capital punishment. There will be a vote on capital punishment, the second in the Parliament, during the report stage of the Criminal Justice Bill after Easter, it was disclosed last night.

Law and order debate, page 2
Parliamentary report, page 4
Leading article, page 11

Tory wets revolt over cut in dole

By Philip Webster
Political Reporter

The Government suffered one of its biggest backbench revolts of the present parliament last night when 13 Conservative MPs voted to restore the 5 per cent cut in unemployment benefit in 1980.

They supported an opposition clause during the report stage of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill, which would have had the effect of restoring the "abatement".

The Government majority fell to 30 but the new clause was rejected by 248 votes to 218. The majority would have been much larger had several MPs in the opposition camp not been absent. Up to half a dozen other Conservative MPs abstained.

The 13 rebels were led by Sir Ian Gilmour, the former Cabinet minister. The others were Mr Robert Hogg (Dumfriesshire), Mr Alan Haselhurst (Staffordshire), Mr Christopher Patten (Bath), Mr Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South), Mr Richard Needham (Cheshire), Mr Peter Bottomley (Greenwich, Woolwich, West), Mr Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East), Mr James Lester (Seaton), Mr David Knox (Leek), Mr Julian Critchley (Hastings), Mr Robin Squire (Hastings, Horsham) and Sir Anthony Meyer (Fleet, West).

One Conservative MP after another rose to attack the Government's decision not to restore the abatement, brought in as a substitute for the taxation of short-term benefits which the Government had pledged in its manifesto to introduce.

Mr Hugh Ross, Minister for Social Security, totally failed to satisfy the critics who constantly interrupted his speech.

Many Conservatives argued during the debate that the taxation of short-term benefits starting in July would bring in over £500m in a full year. The Government should spend the £50m it would cost to restore the abatement.

Mr Ross pottedly answered his backbenchers when he said: "£50m in a year is not a trivial amount to find. We have many things to do in the social security field which we would like to do."

He promised, however, that the abatement would be made good eventually.

Benn seeks royal aid to annul Lords

By George Clark

Mr Wedgwood Benn, who resigned the Stansgate peerage in 1963 and is seen as the main defender of left-wing activists, has produced a plan for the abolition of the House of Lords. It would involve, as he first told the party conference in 1980, a Labour-dominated Commons asking the Queen to create a thousand or so new and temporary peers to break the destruction of the Upper House.

Critics in the Labour Party have argued that this is either impracticable or political nonsense, or else that it would provoke a constitutional crisis, putting the Queen in the centre of a dispute which might result in her refusing to use her prerogative to pave the way for the abolition of one of the estates of the realm.

In a paper that Mr Benn has prepared for the party's machinery of government group, which includes Dame Judith Hart, chairman of the John Silkin, Mr Michael Heseltine, Lord Hailsham, Lord Crompton-Hunt, he seeks to show that his plan is constitutional.

He rejects the suggestions made by Mr Silkin and Mr Michael Cocks, the Opposition chief whip, that the Lords' abolition committee should be given priority in the party manifesto because the Commons would have more important legislation to tackle.

Mr Benn argues that Lords' abolition is the essential prerequisite to legislation, for taking the United Kingdom out of the EEC and thus allowing the new Government to carry through its alternative economic strategy.



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, comforting Mrs Sylvia Martin during a visit to St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, East London, yesterday.

Franc falls to lowest level ever

From Charles Hargrove
Paris, March 18

The franc fell to its lowest level ever against the dollar on Paris exchanges today amid speculation that it may be devalued for the second time in six months.

For two days, the Bank of France has intervened vigorously on the exchanges by selling some \$1,000m (£52m), but this has failed to halt speculation against the franc, which today fell to Fr 6.185 against the dollar, and to Fr 2,605.9 against the Deutschmark. In addition, the domestic leading rate was raised by two points to 17 per cent, its highest level since September.

Given the drastic exchange control measures reintroduced in recent months, which leave little opportunity for domestic speculators, the run on the franc points to a sharp fall of confidence on the part of international investors.

Against the optimism of the Prime Minister, who claimed yesterday that the slowing of inflationary trends was well under way, and the feigned surprise of the Finance Minister at the "agitation" over the franc "when all the objective elements of the economy are satisfactory", sound distinctly hollow. He flatly rejected the possibility of another devaluation.

Uproar as Israelis oust Arab mayor

From Christopher Walker, El-Bireh, March 18

The Israeli authorities today took the unprecedented step of disbanding one of the 25 elected Palestinian municipalities in the occupied West Bank and replacing its Arab mayor with a senior Israeli Army officer.

Within hours of the move, there were reports of renewed Arab unrest from many parts of the occupied area. Troop reinforcements were rushed to the trouble spots by the Israeli military command, and the remaining mayors were planning a coordinated protest in El-Bireh itself. Arab women defied the ban on demonstrations and marched on the municipality shouting angry slogans.

The Israeli action was seen by diplomats as the latest escalation of the policy of attempting to silence all West Bank support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation. It followed the indefinite postponement of the municipal elections and the recent outlawing of the radical National Guidance Committee.

The dissolution order was served on Mr Ibrahim Tawil, Mayor of El-Bireh (civic motto "The City on the Move") after his council voted to boycott the civil administration headed by Mr Menachem Milson, an Israeli professor of Arabic literature.

Mr Tawil, aged 35, one of three West Bank mayors subjected to booby-trap bomb attacks in the summer of 1980

was marched from his town hall by soldiers and later placed under town arrest. He claimed in an interview with *The Times* that the Israelis might soon disband other West Bank councils who have also joined the boycott.

The Israeli Defence Ministry justified the move by saying that it had been taken in the interests of the local Arabs to ensure that they continued to receive the municipal services. Right-wing Israeli politicians were quick to praise the authorities while some left-wingers expressed serious concern at the implications for the future of the West Bank.

After the disbandment, the Israelis issued a military order declaring El-Bireh and the neighbouring Arab town of Ramallah as a "closed area". It was one of a number of reports given an official warning and forced to leave by armed soldiers as many of the 40,000 townspeople launched an immediate protest strike.

Within two hours of Mr Tawil's expulsion, the streets of El-Bireh were being patrolled by hundreds of soldiers carrying automatic rifles. Ramallah was like a ghost town, with all but a handful of food-shops shuttered and suspicious-looking troops gathered in large clusters on street corners. In Nablus the town council called an emergency meeting and announced an immediate three-day general strike.

Shell blast kills three commandos

Three Royal Marine commandos were killed yesterday when a mortar shell exploded on a training exercise at Otterburn, Northumberland. Two others were also badly wounded. (Our Newcastle Correspondent writes).

The men, members of 45 Commando, based at Arbroath, are understood to have died when a shell exploded in the barrel of a mortar as it was being fired. Preliminary investigations suggest a faulty fuse.

The three dead marines were named last night as Anthony Heistrian, aged 20, Peter Butchers, aged 20, from Paignton, Devon, and Glenn Miller, aged 25, from Yeovil, Somerset. All were unmarried.

The two in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne, were Cpl Stanley Wright, aged 25, from Ramsgate, Kent, who was seriously ill, and Marine William Currie, aged 25, from Wetherby, Greater Manchester. Both needed surgery for shrapnel wounds.

The injured had been airlifted to hospital. The helicopter then made the 40-mile return trip to the training range to sweep the area for other casualties.

The Army said later: "These men were killed following an explosion during routine mortar training. The cause of the explosion is not known at present but ammunition technical officers are at the scene to investigate."

'Romans' case ends in confusion

Whitehouse and director both claim victory

By David Nicholson-Lord

The private prosecution of indecency charges brought by Mrs Mary Whitehouse against a National Theatre director ended abruptly and in confusion at the Central Criminal Court yesterday after the intervention of Sir Michael Havers, QC, the Attorney-General.

After a complicated series of legal moves throughout Wednesday, a senior Treasury counsel representing Sir Michael appeared in court yesterday morning to invoke the *nolle prosequi* procedure, ending the case immediately after the withdrawal of the prosecution.

Both sides immediately claimed victory. Mrs Whitehouse, whose prosecution over the play, *The Romans in Britain*, had provoked fears of a renewal of theatre censorship, said she had proved an important legal point. Comments by the trial judge has established that an act of gross indecency could be committed on the stage, she said.

But Mr Michael Bogdanov, the play's director, who faced up to two years' imprisonment on charges under the Sexual Offences Act, 1956, said Mrs Whitehouse had withdrawn the case because she knew the jury would reject it.

Mr Bogdanov, who denied procuring and being party to a simulated act of male homosexual rape during the play, said he had undergone "quite a lot of worry and anguish" in the 18 months since the prosecution was launched.

He added: "I feel very angry that it finished without a conclusive decision. We were not able to put forward coherent and cogent arguments for a play that we had performed with absolute integrity."

Some legal opinion, however, took the view that the

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Whitelaw to set up inquiry on cable TV control

By Anthony Revins, Political Correspondent

The Home Secretary is to set up a formal inquiry into the impact of cable and satellite broadcasting on television standards.

Mr William Whitelaw is acutely concerned that the number of television channels, with the first stage of a national cable television system operating within 18 months and with more than 30 channels ultimately from cable links, will mean loss of control over content.

The fear is that standards will slump, with pornography and other substandard material being broadcast by unscrupulous operators.

Satellite and cable broadcasting will involve a number of go-betweens, including programme-makers, operators who beam programmes up to satellites, those who own or lease satellite facilities, people receiving the satellite pictures, which might then be distributed by cable. That multiplicity of input and output, with some people linked into the system directly by rooftop dish-antennas, has greatly disturbed the Home Secretary.

He has stated that the maintenance of broadcasting standards was one of the most important Home Office problems for the future, and Mr Whitelaw's anxiety will have been increased by the powerful commercial and industrial lobby which has been mobilized behind the change.

The Prime Minister will publish on Monday the Cabinet's Information Technology Advisory Panel's report, outlining the new system's potential. The Government is expected to approve an early start on cable television and commercial satellite links.

The departments of industry and employment have, in particular, pressed for urgency. Mr Whitelaw's fears would seem to have been swept aside, to some extent, in the rush for the undoubted

US clear on Ulster policy, says Haughey

From Our Correspondent Dublin

Mr Charles Haughey, Prime Minister of the Irish Republic said in Dublin yesterday on his return from a visit to the United States, believed President Reagan fully appreciated his policy of seeking a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

Mr Haughey said: "At this stage I am only interested in outlining for him the problem as we see it and the lines along which we think a solution should emerge. The follow-up to that will come later. He was fully appreciative of my outline of the position and he fully understood the lines along which I think a solution can be found."

Mr Haughey said the primary political purpose of the visit had been to explain to President Reagan and his administration the policy of the Republic in relation to Northern Ireland.

On the rockstrewn cliff-top he disclosed that he intends a £750,000 restoration for the craggy bit of

Britain which attracts about one million visitors a year yet was once described by its previous owner as a "tourist slum".

Mr Goldstone, aged 53, has bought Land's End complete with a house that was once an hotel, an assortment of outbuildings and a public house.

In his plans the public house is to stay and so is a large building named State House, but the other buildings are likely to go. In their place he

plans a building to house a permanent exhibition of Cornish crafts. Renovation will not start until the autumn of 1983. Mr Goldstone said: "Land's End was here long before any of us and it will be here long after we have all gone. There is no merit in rushing because we want to make Land's End something of which we can be really proud and which people can visit and not go away feeling disappointed over what they have seen."

The agreement on procedures the two unions are to adopt on recruiting and representation will cover about 15,000 staff in engineering and shipbuilding.

Mr Chapple said he believed the new link with the EMA would provide managers with the choice of a "less politically biased medium" than Tass and ASTMS.

The prime aim of the agreement between EESA and the EMA, which will also cover membership in the aerospace industry, will be to persuade employers that recognition ought to be granted on the basis that the two unions would not be involved in recruitment battles.



New beginning for Land's End

Mr David Goldstone (above), the new owner of Land's End, taking a close look yesterday at the 105 acres of Britain's most famous piece of coastline on which he plans to spend approaching £3m. (Our Bodmin Correspondent writes). Mr Goldstone, a property millionaire, viewed his acquisition after discussions with local planning officials.

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How the choir stalls of Buxheim were sent home

By Geraldine Norman, Sale Room Correspondent

The annual report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, nearly a year out of date as usual, was published yesterday and contained two challenging highlights. For the first time the committee, guardians of Britain's national heritage, have taken into account the "interests of the European and, indeed, the international cultural heritage" and allowed the export of a work of art.

The second highlight is a new mechanism called the "indefinite stop" which guards against the refusal of recalcitrant art owners to sell once the export of their treasure has been disallowed. The committee rallied to the standard of the "international heritage" in the case of a group of Baroque carved wood choir stalls.

Removed from Buxheim in the 1880s they were installed in the chapel of St Saviour's Hospital, London, and then, in 1954, in the Convent of the Presentation at Hythe. In 1980 the convent decided to sell and Sotheby's negotiated their purchase for £450,000 by the Bavarian authorities for reinstallation at Buxheim.

While the committee agreed with their expert adviser from the Victoria and Albert Museum that the stalls qualified for an export stop on the grounds of an outstanding

aesthetic and scholarly interest, they conceded that Buxheim had a prior claim.

When the export of an object has been delayed by the committee to allow a British gallery time to raise the purchase price, and the money has been found, owners have sometimes refused to sell.

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NEWS IN SUMMARY

Forest 'land army' of young urged

A "land army" of young people could be recruited to clear and manage more than 250,000 hectares (1,000 square miles) of unproductive woodland in Britain, it was suggested yesterday. (Our Agriculture Correspondent writes).

Mr Douglas Badham, chairman of the Economic Forestry Group and deputy chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, told the group's annual lunch in London that his proposal would bring economic benefit to the nation.

Deported sect members fly in

Relatives of three young members of the Unification Church failed to persuade them to return to their homes when they arrived at Heathrow Airport yesterday after being deported from the United States for overstaying their visit.

The three, Mr Christopher Barnard, aged 21, from Dorking, Surrey, Miss Nicholas Raine, aged 27, from Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, and Miss Philippa Chamberlain, aged 26, from Crowborough, Sussex, left with other members of the church.

Plessey vote ends sit-in

An eight week occupation at the Plessey factory, Bathgate ended yesterday when the workers voted to accept an offer from another company, Arcotronics, to keep open the factory initially employing only 80 of the 330 workforce. Plessey's planned closure of the plant on March 31 led to the sit-in.

New inquiry into police

A second investigation into allegations against Dorset police is to be carried out by Mr James Brownlow, Chief Constable of South Yorkshire. The allegations, made by the Dorset County Post, are of abuse of police powers in the 1970s.

Queen to visit son on ship

The Queen is to see Prince Andrew at work on the carrier HMS Invincible. With Prince Edward, she will visit the anti-submarine vessel off Portsmouth next month. Prince Andrew, who is 22, joined the ship in January in his role as a helicopter pilot flying Sea Kings with the front line 820 Squadron.

Rape complainant 'shouldn't get aid'

From Jonathan Wills, Edinburgh

The woman in the Glasgow rape and assault case who is trying to bring a private prosecution against her alleged assailants should not be given legal aid, the High Court in Edinburgh was told yesterday.

Mr Hugh Morton, QC, counsel for one of the youths allegedly involved, told Lord Emslie, the Lord Justice General, that since the Crown had dropped its own proceedings, it would be "grossly unfair for the state to get round that by the backdoor, through paying somebody else to take up the prosecution." Lord Emslie said he did not think there was any suggestion of that.

Earlier the court heard further submissions from counsel for the three youths about publicity the case had received allegedly including the publication of evidence. The judges were given files on four newspapers: the Daily Record, Daily Express, the Evening Times of Glasgow and The Sunday Times.

Mr Donald Macaulay, QC, said that the Daily Record's reports were the most significant. It had started the publicity on January 13 by revealing that the Crown had dropped the prosecution.

An article in the Daily Record on January 19 indicated that a reporter had been given access to police notebooks on the case, Mr Macaulay said. Lord Emslie, sitting with Lord Emslie and Lord Avoiside, asked

how such documents had got to the press.

Mr Macaulay said it was extraordinary that any of the defence solicitors' recognition papers could have reached the Daily Record, putting their client in jeopardy. The source of the story must be someone on the other side of the fence, he said.

That publication alone was sufficient to deny the three youths a fair trial, he said. The court had before it a complete file of "extremely adverse publicity". After referring to contacts between "Mrs X", the Glasgow woman aged 29, and the Daily Express, Mr Macaulay said there were questions about the motivation for seeking a private prosecution. "Who is the true complainant?" he asked. "Who is really motivating it?"

Mr Morton said that from the information available there had not necessarily been any material change in the complainant's state of health since last September.

If the private prosecution were allowed and "Mrs X" were again shown to be unfit to testify, there would be a further delay and another flood of publicity.

After further legal debate Lord Emslie adjourned the hearing until today when it is expected to end. A written judgment is expected at a later date.

Mail robbers exposed by woman 'supergrass'

Thomas Wisbey, jailed in 1964 for his part in the Great Train Robbery, was convicted at the Central Criminal Court yesterday of handing over a number of cheques stolen from mail trains.

He was one of 21 people to appear as a result of information given by Miss Zeinab Meer, described as Britain's first "supergrass". Her former boyfriend, William Gentry, leader of the gang that stole the cheques, was also convicted.

Travellers' cheques worth more than a quarter of a million pounds, jewelry and other valuables were stolen from the trains.

Gentry lived with Miss Meer, aged 34, in a council flat in Seldon Walk, Holloway, north London. The flat was used as a distribution centre for the stolen goods according to Miss Meer, who went to the police after her affair with Gentry began to go wrong and assaulted her.

He and two other men, John Dore-Mullins and Salvatore Santoro, travelled regularly from London on mail trains, and sat near the mail carriage, the court was told.

Gentry told Miss Meer he had "a guard in his pocket" and access to the mailbags. The men, who always carried suitcases, were photographed by transport

police at King's Cross and followed. They never completed their journeys, but left the trains, usually at a Midlands station where they were taken by car and taken back to London, Mr David Thomas, QC, for the prosecution, said.

Miss Meer, who was under armed police protection, told the court she was in fear of her life. She denied turning informer for revenge or money.

By the time she went to the police they were already investigating and had photographed and followed Gentry, Mullins and Santoro.

Miss Meer described going to Wisbey's home in Remington Street, Islington, north London, and collecting stolen cheques. Wisbey, aged 51, denied the charge but gave no evidence and called no witnesses.

Gentry, aged 49, of Upper Lisamore Walk, Islington, London, and Santoro, aged 38, of no fixed address, denied conspiring to defraud American Express of travellers' cheques and conspiracy to steal mail. Both were convicted.

Dore-Mullins, aged 60, of Clapham Road, Islington, admitted his part. The four men and 15 other people involved in the robbery will be sentenced today.

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Corporal punishment unlikely to return

CRIME

The Prime Minister does not think that corporal punishment will return to this country, and during question time in the Commons she spread with Mr. James Callaghan, her predecessor, that neither of them had any influence on crime statistics. Labour MPs protested loudly and laughed when Mrs Thatcher appeared at one stage to search through her papers and then said that she had been thinking of the numbers of police killed while on duty.

When he was questioned earlier, Mr. William Whitelaw, Home Secretary, emphasized the need for effective policing. He did not accept that vigilantes in society could be right. People who wanted to help should join the Special Constabulary, he said.

He indicated he hoped to bring forward proposals on new police powers and said it was important that the police got the help and advice of the communities they served through discussions with their police authorities. He was encouraging all police forces to do that.

There will be debates on law and order in the House of Lords next Wednesday and the House of Commons on Thursday.

When Mrs Thatcher was questioned, R. John Carlisle (Luton, West, C) asked: Does she agree that the remarks made yesterday by Mr Callaghan, where he linked the rise in crime with the rise in unemployment, was typically unhelpful and misleading?

Figures released yesterday show that crime in Bedfordshire has risen by 30 per cent, mainly by children under 16.

It is about time this House reintroduced corporal punishment, Mrs Thatcher: So far as I am aware, crime statistics do not show in any way a simple correlation between unemployment and crime. (Labour interruption.) They do not show in any way a simple correlation between unemployment and crime.

About what Mr Carlisle suggests about corporal punishment,

I do not think that it will return in this country.

Mr David Alton (Liverpool, Edgell, L): Will the Prime Minister find time to consider what additional assistance can be given to the victims of violent crime, particularly with telephone and intruder alarms, to people of pensionable age?

In a constituency like mine with 50 per cent unemployment and an increase in crime, is it not a case of the devil finding work for idle hands?

Mr Ivor Stanbrook (Bromley, Orpington, C): In spite of the valiant efforts of the Home Secretary to which I and my Conservative colleagues pay tribute (loud Labour laughter), the causes of crime are deep-seated and various. They include subjects like the family, school, church, television and many others.

Will she therefore consider whether we do not need to take the crime out of the streets, as well as the criminal law?

Mrs Thatcher: I entirely agree that the causes of crime are deep. If self-discipline breaks down in the community, then the problems we are seeing now.

It is vital that all efforts to get the police back on their feet in carrying out their duty of upholding the law.

Mr Alfred Dubs (Wandsworth, Battersea, South, Lab): Can the Prime Minister explain why for each year since she became Prime Minister, the number of serious crimes has increased while the number of police has declined, in 1977, 1978 and into 1979?

Mr James Callaghan (Cardiff, South-East, Lab): That is right.

Mrs Thatcher: Mr Dubs will find that the number of police has increased during the time of the last Government.

Mrs Thatcher looked through a sheet of papers while Labour MPs protested.

She went on: I was trying to find the precise figure but I was unable to.

Mr Callaghan, waving a piece of paper, said: As a matter of simple statistical fact, it is not the case that serious crimes, offences

recorded by the police, of violence against the person, burglary, robbery, handling of stolen goods and criminal damage declined each year when I was Prime Minister and have gone up each year since? (loud Labour cheers)

Despite what Mrs Thatcher said in her election speeches, neither she nor I has any influence at all on those statistics. (Laughter)

Mrs Thatcher: I am grateful to Mr Callaghan for his last comment, which is obviously correct. I cannot reinforce what I said about the number of murders, (Labour interruptions) I was thinking about something else.

I therefore give the House the relevant statistics of which I was thinking, which I had in my mind, although it was not all murders, but the number of police deaths while on duty, which is extremely important. That is a statistic which equally had not, I think, anything to do with the Government in power, I am having other statistics collected. (Labour interruptions)

The Speaker (Mr George Thomas): MPs have not got a right to shout down if they do not like what they are hearing. All this is ruining Prime Minister's question time.

A Labour MP: Try again Maggie.

The Speaker: Does the Prime Minister wish to continue?

Mrs Thatcher: I think I have made the point sufficiently. They are making a triviality of something which is extremely serious.

Mr Callaghan: The Metropolitan Police were right to break down crime statistics into ethnic groups of offenders. Mr Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, has been questioned. He added that he knew in advance of the statistics being published and had agreed they should be.

Mr Christopher Price (Lewisham, West, Lab) asked: Does the Home Secretary believe it is necessary to get the statistics right?

Does he think it was fair that the Metropolitan Police should insist on using ethnic statistics for muggings and refuse point



Callaghan: No influence

Thatcher: I agree

blank to collect that information on anything else, particularly on the people they themselves stop and search in the streets and are later acquitted or no charges are proceeded with?

Mr Whitelaw: There were a great many rumours and a great many allegations before these statistics were published. I believe that the truth is far better than rumour and allegations; that is why it was right for the Metropolitan Police to publish the truth in their statistics.

The truth does help to make the leaders of any community realize that they could help and assist the police to isolate the tiny and small minority in their communities of criminals who are causing all the trouble.

Police deserve support not criticism

Mr Callaghan: The Metropolitan Police deserve the support of MPs and the community and not endless criticism. Mr Patrick Mayhew, Minister of the Home Office, said during other questions on the number of crimes of violence made known to the police during the past 10 years.

Mr Mayhew said that about 100,000 offences of violence against the person were recorded by the police in England and Wales in 1981, which was just over twice as many as in 1971.

Mr Edward Taylor (Southend, East, C): Will he look again with an open mind at the introduction of stronger deterrents, even for a trial period, as a means of curbing crime, including the introduction of capital punishment, corporal punishment and mandatory sentences?

Mr Mayhew: There is shortly to be in the committee on the Criminal Justice Bill a debate upon corporal punishment and I am looking forward to that with keen anticipation. (Laughter) One hears that the House may have a similar opportunity in respect of capital punishment.

Mr Robert Kilroy-Silk (Ormskirk, Lab): Neither capital nor corporal punishment has ever been an effective deterrent. The cause for concern about the increase in serious crime is the economic policies that have led to it and the clear failure of, for example, the Metropolitan Police to catch criminals.

Mr Mayhew: The Metropolitan Police face an enormously complex and even dangerous and difficult task, and they deserve the support of this House and the community, not endless criticism.

New powers envisaged for police

LAW AND ORDER

Mr William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, announced during questions about measures to combat the rising level of violent crime that he hoped to bring forward proposals on new police powers which had been recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure.

When Mr Anthony Marlow (Northampton, North, C) called for the introduction of new measures to combat the rising level of violent crime, Mr Whitelaw replied that the Government has already increased the strength of the police service to a record level. The full benefit of this will be felt as new officers are trained and become fully effective.

But police effectiveness also depends upon the active support and cooperation of the local communities. I am taking steps to encourage and develop this.

Mr Marlow: At a time when one of our citizens falls victim to crime every five minutes, day and night, the public has been reassured that he is spearheading the campaign against these crimes. We should be considering new and effective measures to abate this appalling increase in crime.

Will he reassure the public that he will bring forward these measures if and when necessary, whatever institutions outside may consider?

Mr Whitelaw: I accept the great concern about this. At the same time it is fair to point out what the Government has done and is doing — with the wide range of penalties available to the magistrates and judges in the Criminal Justice Bill, and the prison building programme and prison maintenance to ensure that those whom the judges and magistrates decide to send to prison, should have places there.

The wide range of penalties available in the Criminal Justice Bill, carrying out our election manifesto, is another step in the right direction. That is the right thing for us to do.

Mr Alexander Lyon (York, Lab): All of us are opposed to the rising crime and all of us seek to diminish it by effective policing. The dispute about what is the nature of effective policing,

Where real community policing has been tried, as in Handsworth, it has cut the crime rate on the streets. That is why many of us are supporting community policing, because it is effective.

Mr Whitelaw: The talk about community policing seems to be bedeviling our policing system. What we want is effective policing which means harnessing the support, encouragement and help of the local community from which any police service springs. (Conservative cheers)

Mr Eldon Griffiths (Bury St Edmunds, C): While no one has done more than the Home Secretary to improve the numbers and the morale of the police service, what is he doing in respect of the greater powers that were recommended by the royal commission, the longer training recommended by Lord Scarman, and the greater standardization of equipment, particularly radio equipment, which in too many cases is incompatible between one force and another?

Mr Whitelaw: I hope to be able to bring forward proposals which will implement some part of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure plans on police powers.

Mr Griffiths: Call for longer training

Mr Peter Snape, an Opposition spokesman on home affairs (West Bromwich, East, Lab): Is the Home Secretary satisfied with the deployment and tactics of police forces, particularly in inner city areas, and that police authorities have the right to discuss such matters in areas like Greater Manchester?

That would lead to a more visible police force on the streets and be a far greater deterrent to crime than the unhealthy blood lust shown by some of the Home Secretary's more eccentric supporters. (Labour cheers)

Mr Whitelaw: It is important that the police get the help and advice

Vigilantes in society unacceptable

Mr Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield, C) asked if the Home Secretary was satisfied that the projected increase in police strength in England and Wales was sufficient to deal with the projected increase in crimes of all categories and particularly with regard to street crimes and disturbances in the inner city area.

Mr Whitelaw: Yes. At the end of January, the total strength of the police service in England and Wales was 119,508. This is an increase of 9,562 compared with January 1979.

With the further increase in the police strength already provided for in the next 12 months, the Home Office has a police force of more officers than ever before to carry out the many tasks we expect from our police service.

Mr Winterton: Violent crime against the person is now as important a matter in people's minds as unemployment. With the increase in violent crime, including the setting up of vigilante groups within inner city areas, the situation is growing serious indeed.

What further example can this House set to ensure that the sentences to mete out that fit the crime, but they mete out sentences of imprisonment in this country for the serious crimes being committed?

Mr Whitelaw: I appreciate what he says. I entirely support him in his anxiety about the increases, particularly burglary and street crimes, which are certainly serious indeed and which must be tackled not only by this House, the police service, and the community, but by the community. It is only by a concerted effort that we shall succeed against these particular crimes.

For the benefit of those people who seem to think there is something wrong, the first thing is to have a strong police service. When you have it strong, you need it effective. That is right,

and the Government is directed towards that.

I do not accept that vigilantes in our society can be right. If those people who want to help will do so, they could join the special constables where many good tasks are carried out.

On the sentences of the courts, this House is right to provide sentences; the judges and magistrates carry them out.

Mr Sydney Chapman (Barnet, Chipping Barnet, C): While welcoming the increase of 9,000 police, which I understand includes 400 in the Metropolitan Police force, this should result and continue to result in more policemen patrolling our city streets.

That is the best way to get the cooperation and confidence of the public which is an essential element in tackling the rising crime rate.

Mr Whitelaw: Yes. First, it is the Metropolitan Police which is the most effective with the equipment the Government provides to carry out their duties. That is their task and that they will carry out.

I trust they will get in their task the full help and advice and moral support of the community as a whole.

Mr Roy Hattersley, Opposition spokesman on home affairs (Doncaster, C): Despite Mr Whitelaw's efforts, the Government has been unable to fulfill its election promises to reduce the level of crime in this country. He should make clear that in his view the best way to tackle this is by the use of discipline, discipline in our schools, and many other aspects which contribute to rising crime. The police cannot do it all on their own.

Sir Paul Bryan (Hove, C): I welcome the Government's success in recruiting large numbers for the police. The continuous support it has given the police has been a major factor in success. I am grateful. I hope it can be said that this support will be forthcoming from all sections of the community. Some people are more ready to criticize the police than they are to support them in difficult situations.

Mr Arthur Lewis (Newham, North-West, Lab): We are spending more on the police with more police numbers, more electronic aids, two-way radios, cars, helicopters, and God knows

More coloured policemen are needed

While every effort was being made to encourage members of the ethnic minorities to join the police force it was also essential to maintain high standards, Mr Timothy Bascien, Minister of the Home Office, said.

Mr David Alton (Liverpool, Edgell, Lab) had asked what proportion of the Merseyside constabulary was recruited from ethnic minorities and how this compared with the national average.

Mr Bascien told him: On January 31, 1982, eight Merseyside police officers, 0.17 per cent of the force — were members of the ethnic minorities. The number in England and Wales was 343 — 0.09 per cent.

Mr Alton: This is a pathetically small number of people from the ethnic minorities involved in the policing of our community. What steps will he take to improve this?

Does he accept that until the height restrictions are lifted and the police are applying to join and being turned down will continue to be refused admission to the police force?

Mr Bascien: We accept the number is too low. We have a national group examining the problem and we are conducting a recruiting campaign through the ethnic press and the national press.

As for height restrictions, it is possible for chief constables to lower the height limit if they so desire, but as a general principle we do not believe it right to lower the standards of the police to meet the point.

Mr John Hales (Halesowen and Stourbridge, C): It is essential to maintain the highest possible standard in recruiting to the police, and therefore questions concerning the recruitment of people from the ethnic minorities are not of prime importance.

Mr Bascien: We would like to see the police force as a whole becoming more diverse and we want to see the best possible policemen. Happily the standard of recruiting to the police is rising satisfactorily.

Canada must decide its future

HOUSE OF LORDS

The British Government believed that constitutional disagreements in Canada over the Canada Bill were a matter for the people, the provinces and the Canadian Parliament to decide. Lord Carrington, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said.

He was moving the second reading of the Bill which transfers to Canada the power to amend the Canadian constitution and repeals the power of the British Parliament to legislate for that country.

Lord Carrington said the Supreme Court of Canada had sided with the provinces and was not required by law or constitutional convention to the making of the request to Britain by the Canadian Parliament to bring about this historic change in Canada's constitution. Support for the Bill came out of 10 provinces, a substantial measure of provincial consent.

The British Government felt that the Canadians should decide these matters for themselves and the disagreement did not provide grounds for declining to support the Bill.

Somewhat similar considerations applied to the indigenous populations of Canada whose existing rights were protected by the Indian Act which formed a schedule to the bill. But some Indian groups were dissatisfied with the Act. They wanted more safeguards.

The British Government had always felt that any treaty or other arrangement between the government of the government of Canada and the native peoples was a matter for the Canadian people to decide. In 1931, however, some Indian groups had sought proceedings in the British courts, seeking to rely on the ancient treaties with the Crown.

The Bill would remove the one remaining formal qualification to the independence of Canada. Since the British North America Act, 1867, Canada had been either self-governing or, in practice, independent, but not completely independent. Such a country should have to seek legislation in Britain to change its constitution.

In 1931 the Statute of Westminster annulled the power of the British Parliament to legislate for the dominions, with one exception. Canadians had been unable to bring some amendments to a formula for amending their constitution. So it was at Canadian request that Britain's power was retained.

The Government considered that the fact that the process of amending the constitution was no impediment to Parliament proceeding, if it thought fit, to discuss and enact legislation despite the fact that the legislation if enacted might determine the outcome of the litigation or render its continuation pointless.

When the various legal proceedings were concluded, any delay, especially if other countries were to be affected, might be the case, would be indefinite.

The Government commended the passage of the Bill but would not be criticised for not defending its detailed contents. The House should be realistic and not over-concerned at the residual controversy surrounding this Bill.

Canada was a large and diverse federal country in which political authority was not concentrated as it was in the United Kingdom. The draft in its present form was the result of a long period of internal consultation in Canada. The resulting package was a compromise.

It was not to be expected that such a package would ever be thought ideal by all concerned. The House should be realistic in recognizing the achievement of the present settlement in recognizing the diverse interests involved to

the extent which had proved possible.

Lord Stewart of Fulham, for the Opposition, referred to a motion he had tabled expressing confidence that the Government of Canada, in consultation with the representatives of the aboriginal peoples, would use the provisions of the Bill to promote their welfare.

He said they were now told on the highest legal authority that the responsibility for carrying out any duties they accepted under treaties made with the aboriginal peoples belonged to the parliament and government of Canada. They could not dispute that legal decision, though a number of laymen still have an uneasy thought at the back of their mind.

The Indians were not a party to the emergence of Canada to full independence. It must be difficult for them to accept the proposition that Britain's obligations under those treaties had now been handed over to Canada, despite the fact that they were never asked whether they wanted that transfer to be made.

But there was a larger issue. This was the question of the treatment of a great and powerful nation, mainly of European stock, of people of entirely different race who were a minority and almost in every way the weakest section of the population.

This was not merely a national but an international question. The Indians were great evils springing from the oppression of minority races, from their being treated with a denial of justice, or, what could sometimes be worse, a lack of imagination and sympathy.

In a matter where the principle involved was so great and of such worldwide application, where unquestionably they must feel some moral obligation towards the Indians, they ought at least to make some expression of opinion.

If the Bill was passed, there was no possibility that the Supreme Court — as had been suggested in the Commons — would or could declare the constitutional provisions of 1867 ultra vires and void. The question was substantially decided against the Indians last September and there was no plausible grounds for delay in passing this Bill.

Lord Shaghnessy, in a maiden speech, said he was a Canadian and had become a peer in 1944, and having lived most of his life in Canada had not had an earlier occasion on which to address the House. He apologized for the delay.

This Bill would be the beginning of a new, and he hoped mutually rewarding relationship between Canada and Britain. The great majority of Canadians wanted their constitution lodged in Canada.

Nevertheless, there were some specific provisions of the instrument which were strongly opposed in different parts of Canada for different reasons, and he shared some of these legitimate misgivings. The concerns were about the rights of the native people of Canada, the political and cultural position of Quebec, the linguistic rights of minorities and the application of some of the changes of rights in the schedule to the Bill.

Canada's record had been better than most on the question

of safeguarding the rights of minorities. All native people had the franchise, and, despite some assertions to the contrary, had engaged in consultations with the federal government at ministerial and cabinet committee level. All the desires of the native people had not yet been satisfied, but the moral imperative of this was had been suitably impressed on them by the federal and provincial governments in Canada. Consultations would continue, leading to a gradual solution.

The Bill was the result of a compromise, some might say a characteristically Canadian compromise, but no compromise over being entirely satisfactory to all sides. Casting a shadow over the future of the Canadian confederation was the concept that had come to be called separatism.

In Canada, they would have to find a solution if the country was to develop and prosper as it rightly should.

This Bill (he said) does not satisfy all the aspirations of all Canadians, but in political terms we are the masters of our fate and the resolution of our differences must be made in Canada. I therefore commend this Bill. (Cheers)

Lord Aylesford (SDP) said what worried the aboriginals in the main was the fear about what was likely to happen after the Canadian constitution had been passed. He was particularly worried about the rights of the Indians and the rights of the French.

He recalled that at the 1966 Conference a lot of countries were highly critical of the United Kingdom about the handling of the Rhodesian affairs, the Canadians were particularly helpful to Britain.

I cannot believe (he said) any Canadian government today would behave in any less than matters of human rights than they did in the past.

His party felt the best service they could do to their country was to get the Bill onto the statute book.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt. Rev. Albert Trillo, said no peer, particularly no one on the Bishop's benches, wished to oppose the return of full power of legislation to Canada.

But we just wish to be assured (he said) that our international obligations have been met and that we have done our duty in our power to ensure that the protection given by the Crown to the Indians is safeguarded.

Lord Home of the Birs (C), the former Prime Minister, said it was his great-grandfather, Lord Durham, who wrote the Durham report which set up the first constitution for Canada.

This is to some extent for me (he said) unfinished business.

When he was Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations in the late fifties, patriation was occasionally mooted.

He had taken a definite view that after the North America Act and the Statute of Westminster, the Canadian Parliament and the British Parliament were equal in status and that, therefore, should a request for patriation be made with the authority of Canadian Parliament and a measure of support from the provinces, the correct response for the British Parliament was to grant that request.

Plainly (he continued) the future constitutional development of Canada must be settled from now on in Canada by Canadians for Canadians. (Cheers)

He could see no reason why the elected representatives of the Canadian people would not honour the trust placed in them by the Indians of Canada just as well as Indians had in the past.

He hoped Lord Stewart of Fulham would not press his motion as a difficult one would be a blemish on what otherwise would, he hoped, be a constructive and helpful debate.

Foot urged to contact Brezhnev

DISARMAMENT

Mrs Thatcher the Prime Minister urged Lord Foot, leader of the Opposition, to direct his advice on the zero option in disarmament to President Brezhnev. Mr Foot welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement that she would attend the United Nations special session on disarmament in the summer.

Referring to Mrs Thatcher's answer earlier this week about her attendance at the special session of the United Nations on disarmament in June, he asked: In view of the recent intensifying nuclear arms race, it should be a success and we are glad that it is responding to our invitation to take the meeting. (Conservative laughter)

When will she be presenting to the House and the country the disarmament proposals she proposes to take to the conference and say whether President Reagan consulted her before turning down, without considera-

tion, the proposals by President Brezhnev?

Does she not think it a good idea to consider such proposals before they are rejected?

Mrs Thatcher: I cannot tell Mr Foot the precise date on which I will be going. The opening session takes some days. It is then that the opening statements are made and I hope to be there during that time.

Before President Brezhnev made this statement, which, as I pointed out, freezes substantial Soviet superiority of SS20s, there was a statement by President Reagan which included the zero option.

Mr Foot: We certainly welcomed that statement when it was made and if it could be translated into a firm zero option, it would be able to make some progress.

On the first occasion on which President Brezhnev proposed a disarmament holding up the establishment of SS20s — according to the British Government, was well back into 1979 — on reflection it would have been

much better if proper negotiations had taken place then, before many of the SS20s were established.

Mrs Thatcher: President Reagan's proposal was the zero option; President Brezhnev's proposal was to keep the SS20s but not to increase them. It seems to me that Mr Foot should address his advice to President Brezhnev because it takes two to agree. (Conservative cheers)

Mr Foot: Why did she and her Government refuse to negotiate on these matters before many of the SS20s were established?

Mrs Thatcher: I take it that Mr Foot approves of the zero option and will urge it?

How can we negotiate on the SS20s? The Salt negotiations were between the United States and the Soviet Union. I take it Mr Foot is really interested in the zero option, in which case, he will put pressure on President Brezhnev.

Myth-makers of the thirties

Auden, Isherwood, Spender — they all created powerful myths about the thirties which have distorted our historical memory of this fateful decade. In this week's Times Higher Education Supplement Bernard Bergonzi asks if they have the power to persist.

Also this week:

- * The crisis of university research.
- * Richard Bessel on the holocaust.
- * Kenneth Minogue on Anthony Giddens.

The Times Higher Education Supplement

On sale at newsagents every week, 45p.

Deputy to be new Serjeant

RETIREMENT

The Serjeant at Arms, Colonel Sir Peter Thorne, is to retire on August 20, and his deputy, Major G. V. S. Le Fanu, has been appointed to his place by the Queen, the Speaker (Mr George Thomas) announced.

Mr Thorne read a letter from Sir Peter in which he said he had been in the service of the House of Commons for 33 years and the time had come when he should no longer retain his appointment.

The Speaker added that after consultation with the House of Commons, which had been unanimous, he had submitted Major Le Fanu's name to the Queen, who had accepted his advice.

Mr William Hamilton (Central Fife, Lab) said: It should be brought to the attention of the House that these gentlemen are servants of this House, which ought to have some means of expressing its views, not only on the merits of the present incumbents but as to the future appointment.

Next week's business

The main business in the House of Commons next week will be: Monday: Mental Health (Amendment) Bill, second reading. Tuesday: Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill, completion of remaining stages. Wednesday: Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Bill, second reading. Debate on CAP price proposals for 1982-83. Thursday: Debate on Opposing motion law and order. Friday: Private member's motion on combating juvenile crime. The main business in the House of Lords will be: Monday: Coal Industry Bill, second reading. Tuesday: Taking of Wages Councils (Abolition) Bill, second reading. Debate on hard drug taking. Tuesday: Canada Bill, committee. Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976 (Continued) Order. Wednesday: Debate on the increase in crime. Thursday: Canada Bill, third reading. Tuesday: Discontinuation of Pornography Bill, second reading.

Move to get more child benefits rejected

SOCIAL SECURITY

An Opposition attempt to increase the level of child benefit from £5.85 to £6 in November and to build in an increase in every succeeding year, was defeated by a Government majority of 53, during the report stage of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill.

To restore child benefit this November to its real purchasing power, the Government came into office, it should go up to £6.25. Mr Jeffrey Rooker, an Opposition spokesman on Social Security, (Birmingham, Per, Lab) said when he moved a new clause to raise child benefit to £6.25 in November instead of the Government's announced figure of £5.85.

The clause was much too modest, he said. When raised, child benefit would be 40p a week less than it would otherwise have been.

The cost would be about £75m, which was chickenfeed in terms of public expenditure. This was the benefit which could have the greatest impact in getting families out of the poverty trap.

Mr Andrew Bennett (Stockport, North, Lab) said child benefit had been introduced to

great people whether they paid it or not in the same way, recognized that children placed a considerable financial burden on the family.

The case for moving it up significantly, he said, was the tragedy of the Budget was that the Government had done nothing to help the situation. This modest proposal for the extra 15p would make life a lot simpler for Post Offices and would be a useful addition.

Mr Peter Bottomley (Greenwich, Wandsworth, West, C) said families whose income was below the tax threshold were getting substantially more help in real terms than those above it.

If MPs were serious about getting help to families with children child benefit was the only way to do it. He would support the Opposition's new clause.

Mr Frank Field (Birkenhead, Lab) said child benefit was one of the weapons for combating child poverty and the way to use it was by increasing the amount paid out. He said it was one of the Government's first priorities in its fiscal policy.

Mr William Hamilton (Central Fife, Lab) said those who had suffered from the present Government were the families

with children. Over the past 20 years this group had come off worst under the tax burden.

It was time the Government stopped being sycophants and showed it had some humanity by agreeing to this little extra.

Mr Anthony Newton, Under Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, said everyone wanted to see child benefit rise, but the practical realities of the economy had to be considered. Although the increase would sound small, it would amount to some £80m over a year and that was not peanuts.

Lawyers had told him that such an increase might have to be introduced in April rather than November and that could mean the total cost rising to more than £200m.

Mr Brynmor John, chief opposition spokesman on social services, (Ponypriest, Lab) moved a new clause to restore the 5 per cent shortfall made in unemployment benefit in lieu of taxation, which had been done under the Social Security (No 2) Act 1980.

He said there was a proposal to tax this benefit in July, and the effect of the Budget was not to restore that abatement. The statement should be restored.

That was what the public had been told to expect.

If it was not done, there would be an element of double jeopardy. The unemployed would be taxed and then the unemployment benefit would be cut.

The Government had said that the cost of restoring the abatement this year was £20m and £60m in a full year. But this had to be set against the background that the unemployment benefit was expected to yield in a full year £525m.

If there was £80m available in the social services budget, there was no reason why it could not take priority over additional child benefit. When there was only £80m available, it was a matter of finding the right balance.

Extra money would not be found by shuffling around the social services budget or the tax rates. It could only come by the further generation of national resources in the economy and that was the Government's aim.

The new clause was rejected by 248 votes to 218 — Government majority 30.

The amendment was rejected by 255 to 202 Government majority 53.

NEWS IN SUMMARY

Turks under Tindemans scrutiny

Ankara. — Mr Leo Tindemans, Belgium's Foreign Minister who is President of the EEC Council of Ministers, was due to arrive here today on a two-day mission to Turkey on behalf of the Community. One of his tasks is to investigate conditions under martial law.

Diplomatic sources said his talks with General Kenan Evren, the Turkish head of state, Mr Bulent Ulusu, Prime Minister and Mr Uter Turkmen, Foreign Minister, would probably concentrate on Turkey's plans to return to democracy by 1984.

Military rule, imposed 18 months ago, has strained relations with the EEC. Last year, the Community froze payment of some \$650m in grants and loans in protest at the imprisonment of Mr Bulent Ecevit, former Prime Minister.



Questions for Mr Ulusu (left) and General Evren

Angola rejects 'absurd' claim

Lisbon. — Angola, denying that a South African raid inside its borders had destroyed a Swapo base, said there were no guerrilla camps inside its territory.

"It is anyway obviously absurd that there should be any guerrilla camps so close to the (Namibian) border", an embassy spokesman said here.

South Africa, which said the base was 14 miles inside the border, made the claim at a time when it was trying to show its strength. The spokesman said: "They do not want Namibian independence and they are in difficulties".

Angola, which said the base was 14 miles inside the border, made the claim at a time when it was trying to show its strength. The spokesman said: "They do not want Namibian independence and they are in difficulties".

Greek students lefter than left

Athens. — If the Greek Socialists had hoped to see their national election victory last October reflected in Wednesday's student elections, they will have been disappointed (Mario Modiano writes). The pro-Moscow Communists retained their lead with 31 per cent of the vote, whereas the Socialists stayed second with 26 per cent.

The Socialists were looking for increased support for the Government's controversial universities reform plans. There was a record 54 per cent turnout.

Space shuttle site switched

Cape Canaveral. — The landing site for the third flight of the space shuttle Columbia was switched from California to New Mexico because of floods at the air base outside Los Angeles.

Mission officials decided that Edwards air base in the Mojave desert, swamped by heavy rain, would not be suitable for the shuttle's landing on March 29 and decided to plan the landing for White Sands, New Mexico, the shuttle's contingency landing site. The seven-day mission is scheduled to begin on Monday, with launching from Cape Canaveral's Kennedy space centre.

Ben Bella sees only corruption

Paris. — "Everything is corrupt" in Algeria, Mr Ahmed Ben Bella, the leader of the struggle for independence and its first President, said on Radio Monte Carlo on the twentieth anniversary of independence.

Since his overthrow by Colonel Boumedienne in 1965, it had been "totally negative", Agriculture had been "murdered", he said.

Civil servant's body exhumed

Paris. — The body of René Lucet, the social security director of Marseilles whose recent death caused a political scandal, has been exhumed to determine whether he committed suicide or was murdered.

Lucet was a controversial figure well known for his conservative views. He was dismissed and on March 4 was found shot in the head, an apparent suicide.

US to return Nazi art loot

Washington. — President Reagan authorized the return to West Germany of thousands of Nazi art works seized by the United States Army at the end of the Second World War. The Army possesses more than 6,000 works of art commissioned by Hitler to glorify the Nazi cause and war effort.

Britain's budget dispute casts EEC into gloom

From Ian Murray, Brussels, March 18

The battle over the size of Britain's contribution to the EEC budget has created what could be called "a Europe of the accountants". Mr Gaston Thon, President of the European Commission, complained today.

Speaking to a seminar of the European Movement, he cited the failure to resolve the British problem as the prime example of that lack of solidarity and understanding which was making the achievements of the Community precarious and inadequate.

His pessimistic speech came at the end of a three-day meeting of agriculture ministers here where national divisions loomed large, and little if any progress was made towards a settlement on farm prices by the annual target date of April 1. The one clear hint to emerge from the argument was that France is prepared to use national aids to pay its farmers if Britain blocks a price increase beyond that date.

President Mitterrand made it clear yesterday that the interests of French farmers would be defended resolutely. After yesterday's meeting of the French Cabinet, his spokesman said that France could not allow one government to obstruct the implementation of fundamental Community rules.

Mme Edith Cresson, the French Agriculture Minister, had given a strong indication the previous day in Brussels that France would try to force a majority vote on agricultural prices if Britain were isolated on the negotiations, due to resume on March 31. Having been strongly attacked by French farmers in recent weeks for failing to maintain their living standards, she must have been reassured to hear her President rally to their support.

France, President Mitterrand said, would not accept any dismantlement of the Common Agriculture Policy. It was looking to its partners to say clearly that Europe must either continue to develop or else admit they would like to allow a crisis to develop, which would harm the Community at a moment when European cooperation was so vital.

Britain is confident that it will be able to resist any move to force farm-price fixing by a majority vote and the Commission has already made it plain to France that any national aids paid to farmers would probably be in contravention of the Treaty of Rome.

Nevertheless, both countries now seem set on an all too familiar collision course for next Tuesday's meeting of foreign ministers, which is expected to make yet another attempt to resolve the question of the British budget problem. The tour of European capitals by Mr Thon and Mr Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Foreign Minister who is the current President of the Council, has failed to find any new element which might break the deadlock.

Somewhat idealistically the

Commission is still hopeful of finding guidelines for reforming the CAP and identifying the size of the British budget contribution. Mr Tindemans, like most of the member states including Britain, believe that the only way forward will be to try to agree real figures.

All that, however, means that a decision on agricultural prices, which must be intimately linked with a budget settlement, will be even more difficult. A further complication is that the foreign ministers next week will have been given a first glimpse of the 100-page document prepared by the Greek Socialist Government setting out its new demands from Europe.

Greece will not be seeking a renegotiation so much as adjustments in what it regards at the essential areas in the course of routine negotiations. Satisfying the Greek demands will certainly be expensive. They concentrate on higher subsidies and more agricultural fund regional spending, while asking for a derogation of the right of foreign firms to set themselves up in the country.

It is unlikely, therefore, that the foreign ministers will feel generously disposed towards Britain. Should they have little to report, then Mrs Margaret Thatcher will face a hard job persuading the other heads of government at the next week to spend time on the problem. President Mitterrand, for one, will want to use the occasion principally for grappling with unemployment.

In his speech today Mr Thon pleaded once again for member states to find the political courage to show majority rule as a way to give Europe back its impetus and to allow the Community to face up to the challenges of the present. The member states would, however, vote unanimously against such an idea at the moment and the British budget problem will have to be resolved by hard-won promises.

□ London: The long-standing dispute over the size of Britain's budget contribution is expected to feature prominently during talks at Chequers on Friday between Mrs Thatcher and Herr Helmut Schmidt, the West German Chancellor (David Cross writes).

The full day of deliberations is not expected to take the dispute much further. But the two leaders and their foreign ministers will have a chance to air their views in advance of the EEC foreign ministers' meeting and the European summit.

Other topics expected to arise include East-West relations in the wake of the Polish crisis and international economic affairs.

□ Athens: Senhor Francisco Pinto Balsemão, the Portuguese Prime Minister, arrived in Athens today on an official visit to seek a reaffirmation of Greek support for his country's early entry to the EEC (Mario Modiano writes).

Vatican will go deeper into the red

From John Earle, Rome, March 18

The Vatican is budgeting for a deficit this year of 36,381m lire (£15.5m), compared with the 1981 deficit of 31,000m lire. This figure was made known today at the end of a three-day meeting of a commission of 15 cardinals from all continents, set up by the Pope last May to discuss ways of restoring its finances to health.

Given Italy's inflation of nearly 20 per cent and the lira's sliding exchange rate, the estimate suggests that the deficit of the Roman Catholic Church's central administration is being kept under control. Furthermore a statement issued after the meeting, the second since the commission's foundation, said last year's deficit had been entirely covered by the positive and generous response of the faithful throughout the world. After special appeals, they have increased their contributions to Peter's Pence, money collected in parishes and dioceses for the Pope.

Cardinal Giuseppe Caprio, prefect for economic affairs, illustrated to the commission the Holy See's rising expenditure, due not only to inflation but also to its increasing activities and salary and pension awards for the 5,179 staff. At the same time, the statement said, revenue remained stationary and the administration had succeeded in making economies.

The Pope attended the last session today. The cardinals on the commission will now illustrate the state of the Vatican's finances to their various episcopal conferences. The Vatican's deficit, then of 17,000m lire, was first made known in 1977, but its budget has never yet been published.



Sultan on parade

Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman reviewing a guard of honour at the Royal Armoured Corps' base at Bovington, Dorset, where he spent most of yesterday, the third day of his state visit to Britain. He watched various tank and fire power demonstrations before returning to London to host a banquet in honour of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

MP's cleared of plot

Rome, March 18. — Italy's Parliament voted today to shelve charges against two former Prime Ministers and a former Defence Minister of complicity in an alleged secret service cover-up over a bomb outrage in 1969.

A joint session split on party lines and decided there was insufficient evidence to send them to the Constitutional Court. Those cleared were Signor Giulio Andreotti and Signor Mariano Rumor, former Christian Democratic Prime Ministers and Signor Mario Tanassi, former Social Democratic Defence Minister.

Signor Tanassi fell from Office and served six months in jail for taking bribes in a scandal involving contracts with the Lockheed Aircraft Company. Signor Andreotti was accused of perjury in the trial of those accused of bombing a Milan bank in 1969.



Battling on through fire and ice

The twisted metal of burnt-out snowmobiles shows just one of the serious setbacks suffered by Sir Ranulph Fiennes on his way to the North Pole with the British Transglobe Expedition. But yesterday he and his companion, Dr Charles Burton, managed to escape from the ice

floe, 375 miles from the pole, on which they had been trapped by melting ice.

They waited for another ice floe to drift alongside then drove a snowmobile across before the gap reopened. News of the escape was given in a radio call to their base camp.

Mr Anthony Preston, the expedition secretary, said their back-up aircraft—damaged in a blizzard—had been patched up and would now be able to act as a scout for them. Earlier the explorers had pledged they would carry on to the end of their mission.

The message was given late on Wednesday night in a radio-telephone link between Dr Burton and his wife in London. The explorers are more than half way through an attempt to circumnavigate the world: the journey started and is due to finish at Greenwich.

US will fight to stop missiles in Cuba

From Our Correspondent, Washington, March 18

Mr Caspar Weinberger, the American Defence Secretary, made clear today that the United States would do whatever was necessary to prevent Soviet nuclear missiles from being stationed in the Cuban area.

The Reagan Administration is studying the implications of a warning by President Leonid Brezhnev on Tuesday that the Soviet Union would take retaliatory steps if the United States went ahead with its plan to deploy 572 cruise and Pershing missiles in Western Europe.

Some American experts took this to be a veiled warning that President Brezhnev may be threatening to put nuclear missiles into Cuba and thus rekindle the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. But Mr Weinberger in a television interview today described President Brezhnev's remark as very obscure and ambiguous and said: "We don't know what he was talking about."

Mr Weinberger said any move to put nuclear missiles in Cuba would violate the Washington-Moscow understanding that ended the 1962 missile crisis and led to the removal of Soviet missiles from the Caribbean basin.

□ Moscow: Stung by the cool Western response to President Brezhnev's offer to freeze deployment of Soviet SS20 missiles west of the Urals, the Russians have accused the White House of acting hastily, irresponsibly and without any real policy on arms control (Michael Binyon writes).

A Tass military commentator accused the United States of rejecting the Soviet offer without bothering to study it seriously or giving it any well-pondered evaluation. He said the Reagan Administration always reacted negatively to Soviet

proposals because it did not have anything to hold up America's military build-up.

"The hasty and confused reaction of the White House and the State Department naturally prompts the world public to ask what is more prevalent in the present United States policy: sheer levity, lack of experience in international relations or an irresponsible and adventurist approach to the cardinal problems bearing on the destiny of mankind", Tass said.

It said President Reagan's statement that the United States must not simply freeze nuclear arms production but cut down on stockpiles would deceive nobody. It was Washington that rejected the Salt 2 treaty providing for substantial reduction in strategic armaments, and it was the present Administration that was delaying resumption of the Soviet-American talks on this.

"It is difficult to disagree with a statement of Senator Edward Kennedy that the present Administration has absolutely no definite direction in the field of arms control, and that it has no policy of peace but of building up armaments".

The agency accused President Reagan of seeing his chief mission as the deployment of new medium-range missiles in Western Europe.

Tass said the Administration was trying to extend the arms race all over the world, and rejected even American proposals for disarmament that came from the Senate. In pointed contrast, the news agency has been quoting extensively from Western peace movements, to whom the Soviet offer is clearly addressed, showing warm endorsement and support for the proposals.

Haiti coup sunk by seasickness

From Christopher Thomas, Miami, March 18

Sixteen would-be mercenaries who mounted a feeble attempt to invade Haiti are under arrest in Miami today, recovering from acute seasickness. Despite a strong element of farce the FBI says it is having to take them seriously.

The Coast Guard cutter, the Cape Current, with seven heavily armed FBI agents on board, intercepted the men in two luxury cabin cruisers 12 miles off the Florida coast. They fully expected a gun battle but instead discovered the boats bobbing aimlessly with almost every crew member flat on his back. "They were so sick they were useless", Mr Joseph McCollum, the chief of the local Coast Guard, said. "They were having a hell of a time".

The expedition began with two advertisements in the wanted column of the Miami Herald on February 26. One said "Small multi-national corporations need security help. Short-term compensation plus bonus." Then the advertisement listed a series of numbers easily recognized as army codes for riflemen, medics and special force soldiers.

The telephone number of the Miami headquarters of the Council for the National Liberation of Haiti, which has a long and sad history of sending invasion forces to the island, was conveniently supplied. Applicants were told to ask for Captain Ben, who in fact was Captain Benjamin Weissberg, on of those under arrest and charged with violation of the Neutrality Act. The force of 10 Americans and six Haitians set off from Miami with 26 rifles, seven shotguns, six handguns, 20,000 rounds of ammunition and military caps wearing the insignia of various divisions of the United States armed forces.

Washington's propaganda war Support for Duarte demanded

From Mohsin Ali, Washington, March 18

United States Administration and congressional concern about Cuba's alleged support for guerrillas in El Salvador and for Nicaragua is growing daily.

Mr Robert Kasten, a key Republican senator from Wisconsin, said yesterday he was convinced Nicaragua and Cuba were controlling the left-wing guerrillas in El Salvador and added that the Reagan Administration should disclose more evidence to build public support for its Central America policy.

He said the Reagan Administration had got to bring information into public view and let the people know what was going on. The Administration should move to counter "what is clearly a tide in American public opinion" against support of President José Napoleon Duarte's Government.

Mr Kasten, who is chairman of the Senate appropriations sub-committee on foreign operations, said through a spokesman today he had seen evidence in closed Senate meetings that had convinced him of outside forces being involved in Central America, specifically in Nicaragua and infiltrating El Salvador.

He hoped that a good part of this concrete evidence could be made public without jeopardizing the United States intelligence-gathering

efforts so that the American people could come to the same conclusion about the need for help of Washington's allies to straighten out the position in this area.

Mr Kasten, who did not name the allies, added that if they could see what "we are privileged to see" the Reagan Administration's policy would be clearer and much easier to support.



Mr Kasten: Convinced of Cuban involvement

He thought additional background proof of outside intervention, by Cuba and Nicaragua, would help Congress here take a much more favourable look at President Reagan's Caribbean basic economic aid and trade initiative and also at his latest request for \$350m (£180m) in emergency aid to the Caribbean basin countries, including \$128m to El Salvador.

□ San Salvador: A right-wing group issued a death list yesterday of 34 people including 20 representatives of United States news organizations, a BBC correspondent and the information officer of the United States Embassy in San Salvador. (AP reports).

None of the reporters on the list appeared to take it very seriously. Many said their names had been included on similar lists compiled by left-wing as well as right-wing factions in El Salvador's civil war. One report described the death list as a possible hoax.

The group called itself the Anti-Communist Alliance and had not been heard of before. It claimed affiliation with the Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Brigade, the most notorious of the right-wing death squads that murder suspected supporters of the left-wing guerrillas with the tacit approval of the Government's security forces.

The journalists on the list included the representatives of the Miami Herald, the New York Times, the Washington Post, NBC, United Press International and the Associated Press.

Meanwhile, left-wing guerrillas ambushed a National Guard lorry and burnt three other vehicles yesterday in an area of San Vicente province that the Government claimed to have cleared over the weekend.

Senate votes to toughen law protecting spies

From Nicholas Ashford, Washington, March 18

The Senate has endorsed legislation intended to curb the activities of people like Mr Philip Agee, the former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent, who make it their business to reveal the identities of American spies.

It voted yesterday 55-39 for an amendment to toughen a proposed Senate Bill by making it a crime for journalists and others to identify or expose covert United States agents if they have reason to believe that disclosure would "impair American intelligence activities".

The Bill, known as the Intelligence Agencies Protection Bill, presents a classic conflict between those who want to safeguard national security and those who feel the protection of civil liberties is of paramount importance.

Supporters of the Bill claim that the disclosure of the identities of 1,000 CIA operatives by Mr Agee and of around 2,000 intelligence agents by Mr Louis Wolf in his newsletter *Covert Action Information Bulletin* not only puts the lives of these individuals at risk but threatens to undermine America's foreign intelligence apparatus.

On the other hand, the Bill's opponents, who include journalist groups and civil liberties organizations, argue that the proposed law is an unconstitutional violation of freedom of speech.

He added: "You can knock the tar out of the CIA so long as you don't name names".

The Bill, which provides for prison sentences of up to three years and fines of up to \$15,000 (£8,300) for each violation, still has to be given final approval by the Senate. But its passage seems assured. The mood on Capitol Hill is strongly in favour of giving secret agents better protection.

They were protesting against the introduction of a composite government energy Bill which they contended should be broken up into at least eight separate Bills. The Government refused initially to give in to their demands.

Constitution problems for Mugabe

From a Correspondent, Salisbury, March 18

Confusion reigns over the Zimbabwean Prime Minister's plans to revise the British-drafted Lancaster House constitution.

Dr Edmore Zvobgo, the newly appointed Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, told journalists yesterday that he had been given the go-ahead by Mr Robert Mugabe, the Prime Minister, to rewrite the constitution. "The Prime Minister feels there is a need now to transform our constitution and to move very speedily in that direction", he said.

However, he pointed out that the proposed changes would not be brought about unconsciously, repeating an assurance that has already been made by Mr Mugabe. "In fact, while Dr Zvobgo was outlining his plans, the Prime Minister was reassuring potential foreign investors that their property rights would be secure with the 'iron-clad guarantees' enshrined in the constitution."

The document, which guards against abuses of civil rights and virtually guarantees a multi-party democracy for the next few years, was approved by Mr Mugabe and other parties at the British-chaired Lancaster House peace talks that brought an end to white rule in Rhodesia. But since coming to power almost two years ago, Mr Mugabe has repeatedly stated his party's commitment to the creation of a one-party state.

To make the changes constitutionally, Mr Mugabe will apparently have to win the unanimous support of his war-time ally, Mr Joshua Nkomo, who was dismissed from the Government last month and the fractured Republican Front (RF) party of Mr Ian Smith, the former Rhodesian Prime Minister.

For the first 10 years of independence, the Declaration of Rights, which generally guarantees civil rights, can be altered only by a unanimous assembly vote. Amendments to most other aspects of the constitution require approval by not less than 70 per cent of the House and two thirds of the Senate.

Energy Bill takes its toll

From John Best, Ottawa, March 18

The division bell fell silent in the Canadian House of Commons yesterday after ringing without interruption for 16 days.

A compromise agreement between the Liberal Government and the Conservative Opposition enabled the House finally to vote on a proposed energy motion. The motion was defeated but the House rose for the day, on a procedural technicality. Regular proceedings will resume today.

They were protesting against the introduction of a composite government energy Bill which they contended should be broken up into at least eight separate Bills. The Government refused initially to give in to their demands.

Yesterday's vote ended one of the most bizarre episodes the Canadian Parliament has ever witnessed. After introducing their amendment motion on March 2, the Conservatives marched out of the Commons chamber and stayed out, refusing to come back and vote on their own motion.

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THE ARTS

Opera
Good to look at

Donizetti

Collegiate Theatre

It was another red-letter night for the Donizetti Society and rare romantic opera aficionados as the operatic curtain at this year's Camden Festival rose on the British premiere of two one-act Donizetti works that had slept in reserve stock ever since their first double-bill performance in Naples in 1831. They will be aired again tonight and tomorrow.

There are usually one or two good reasons why the dust has grown so thick. The "melodrama" *Francesca di Foix* and the comical *Le romanzieri* were composed between Anna Bolena and *L'elisir d'amore* and certainly show Donizetti beginning to cut his expressive coat according to his technical cloth. But both are too long by half, and, even with brave, neatly-tailored English translation by Don White, for every witty couplet, for every jolly or affective tune, every poignant moment of orchestration, there are yards of note and word-spinning that little can save.

What did just save the evening were the visual pleasure and ingenuity of Steven Gregory's designs, beautifully lit by Tim Bell, equally versatile and strong, well-chosen casts, and vibrantly energetic musical direction from David Parry, conducting the English Symphony Orchestra.

Since *Francesca di Foix* is a tale of misguided deception, suspicion and jealousy at the sixteenth-century French court, it is incredible, slacker-structured and dramatically vacuous, the producer, Sally Day, had to work hard. She chose to play up the musical clichés by sending them up with yet more clichéd stage routines — an acceptable idea in theory, but clumsily, at times embarrassingly, overdone.

The vocal and dramatic skills of singers like Della Jones (a splendidly swagging Page), Donald Maxwell (a rubber-faced, sententious, villainous Count), and Russell Smythe (a dashing, vocally virile King) are considerable enough, and Gillian Sullivan, as radiant as ever, made the hour well worthwhile with her agile, ringing floritura, as golden as her costume and the autumnal light on the castle walls.

For *Le romanzieri*, these walls cunningly formed the interior of a 1920s salon. Russell Smythe became Fildoro, the fiancé of Lady Antonina, Della Jones was transformed into a romantic grande-dame of a lady novelist, while Donald Maxwell reappeared as a miserably characterized, unflatteringly resonant literary agent, Tommaso.

The linking spoken dialogue is missing from this work, and Opera Rara have made an ingenious job of reconstructing, resetting, rewriting and reworking it up a place of theatre that can house Donizetti's notes. But here, with weaker plot and ensembles, the production had to work even harder, and one was painfully conscious of the fact in the valiant but seemingly endless send-ups of stock arias, the laboured comic business.

Again there was plenty for the ear to enjoy, particularly in Russell Smythe's tireless, musical and mellow handling of his flowery set pieces, and in Della Jones's colourful vocal and physical stamina.

Hilary Finch

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Cinema

The moral behind a savage enigma

El Salvador: Another Vietnam

ICA Cinematheque

Death is my Trade (A)

Paris Pullman

Rough Cut and Ready Dubbed

ICA Cinema

The Secret Policeman's Other Ball (AA)

ABC Shaftesbury Avenue

Wild Women of Wonga (A)/Glen or Glenda?

Scala

The most salutary film from this week's decidedly heterogeneous selection is Glenn Silber and Tete Vasconcellos' *El Salvador: Another Vietnam*. American-made, it is vehemently anti-interventionist; and the clarity of its exposition and weight of documentary evidence are shocking and undecipherable.

The credit titles reveal the huge range of archive sources that have been searched to make the case, to show how the old oligarchy maintains its grasp of the wealth of El Salvador by the simple process of eliminating any opposition from those who have been denied even the smallest share. Like any other argumentative documentary of the sort, this one invites us to see and hear the testimony of people — priests, politicians, missionaries, peasants — who argue the case for the underprivileged. The difference in *El Salvador: Another Vietnam* is that the next moment we are likely to see the abused corpses of these self-same people being retrieved from shallow graves.

The viewpoint is not only that of the resistance and revolution. The military is accompanied by a detachment of the armed forces, implementing the vaunted agrarian reform programme; the operation, which

is called a "sweep", turns out to be an undisguised, policing and punitive exercise. President Duarte himself has his say, to answer, with undeniable if unguarded logic, the charges that a lot of peasants have been killed: naturally they have, he says, since most people in El Salvador are peasants.

The film-makers remain unemotional and rational, and their film presents both a moral and an enigma. The moral (voiced by one of the San Francisco longshoremen who boycotted military shipments to the junta) is that hunger and oppression create more revolutionaries and Communists than Russia or Cuba could ever make. The enigma is how soldiers — whether here or in Poland, whose military regime looks almost benevolent beside that of El Salvador or anywhere else — can be trained to turn their guns, ruthlessly and unquestioning, upon their own kin.

Part of the answer is provided in *Death is my Trade*, shown here as *Death is my Trade*, which recreates the life story of Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz who with relentless efficiency raised the daily rate of extermination, to the death of millions of Jews.

Seeking an explanation for the "good soldier" enigma, Kotulla quotes an American psychologist, Stanley Milgram, who wrote a study of *Obedience to Authority*: "The essence of obedience consists in the fact that a person comes to view himself as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer regards himself as responsible for his actions." Höss was the perfect case-history, not a heroic figure struggling with conscience, nor a ruthlessly exploiting a position of power, but a functionary who has been given a job to do and who strives to create an impression of competence in his work.

A boy soldier devoted to his officers in the First World War, Höss joined the Freikorps after it, quickly showing Sparteist revolt. The drift through unemployment to the SA was inevitable, as was the zeal to justify Hitler's confidence in promoting him to run the Auschwitz programme.

Kotulla's film, based on Höss's reminiscences — written while awaiting execution — and Robert Merle's novel *Le Mort*, set most chillingly shows a man who sees no blood on his hands, only ink. It is a routine job, sitting at a desk, passing plans for gas chambers



A wild week in the cinema: Billy Connolly in "The Secret Policeman's Other Ball" and "Women of Wonga" in line for a Golden Turkey award.

and crematoria, adding up the daily figures, checking train timetables and consignments. For Höss, Auschwitz is the office; and when a shot is heard, he turns his back in cheerful confidence that the officer will put it in the report, that in the end it is all statistics on paper.

Men like Höss are dangerous not because they are inherently wicked but because they are dull and stupid. It is a proposition that is not easy to dramatize. Villains we know make good drama. Dull men tend to stay dull. Conscientiously Kotulla has resisted any temptation to sensationalize his material. He practically never shows us the victims. As conscientiously, and at great length, he details every step of Höss's progress. For all the care and good intentions it grows terribly ponderous; and the danger is that, when even a slight boredom is allowed to set in, the sense of the importance of the subject is all too rapidly dispersed.

The perils of obedience and conformity are apparent again in the documentary reportage *Rough Cut and Ready Dubbed*. It is not a specially sophisticated piece of film-making — it is, after all, the work of ten teenagers, imaginatively subsidized by the Greater London Arts Association and the British Film Institute — but it is as lively and intimate a view as we have seen of punk bands and their followers.

Many of the performers (most notably the urbane Cockney Rebels) are bright as berries and totally self-aware. Most of the fans are tribals, conforming not just to their obligatory uniforms as skins or mods or punks but also to group attitudes on race, authority and riot. There is a startling glimpse of the power of the performer as demagogue: a musician recalls how a word to the punk supporters at a concert was enough to launch a sharp military fashion mop-up of hostile skins in the audience. It is a funny, amusing, truthful and finally disquieting ethnographical study of the lost tribes of London.

Reverting momentarily to *El Salvador*, Ol' Hopalong proves the undoubted star of *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball*. John Wells has added to his twitish Denis Thatcher (who never seems as smug as the real thing) an eerily real Ronald Reagan, beaming under his pancake as he menaces Reds of all colours, and experiencing grave difficulty in putting his pistol back into its holster.

It is only one of the unruly treats of the annual charity show in aid of Amnesty, this year unassumingly put on film by Julien Temple. Other memorable highlights include Billy Connolly's loving reminiscences of the crunch of glass underfoot at Glaswegian parties, and Alan Bennett's characterization of a mild-mannered

married man charging out of the closet in W.11.

Since someone had the notion of a Golden Turkey award there has been a campy vogue for bad films. It is a harmless spectator sport, and all next week the Scala provides a double bill of two of the worst. The 1950s seem to have been the classic nadir: the dominant characteristic of the most enjoyably awful of such films is foolish, blind ambition. The makers of *Wild Women of Wonga*, for instance, set out to make a lusty South Seas romance given only a few yards of Florida shore, two beach huts thinly disguised with grass and a bunch of non-acting no-talent apparently picked off the street.

At some point they clearly recognized the idiocy of the thing and played it for laughs. The quality of Edward D. Wood Junior was his invulnerable innocence in the face of his own folly. Glen or Glenda?, a problem picture about transvestites (in 1954 sex changes were in the news), is a muddle of bad acting and worse writing, diabolic dream sequences and endless scenes of devastated wives coming upon their husbands wearing their best sweaters and stockings. The star turn is Bela Lugosi as chorus, surrounded by skeletons and fuming retorts, and acting the celestial puppet master with joyful cries of "Pool the strewns!"

David Robinson

Concerts

Realms of rapture

BBCSO/Barshai

Festival Hall/Radio 3

Beethoven did not have a great deal of time for composers, so one can well imagine his annoyance that we should still be calling his fifth piano concerto by its baseless nickname, and his amazement that, nearly two centuries after the event, we should be performing the cantata he wrote at the age of 19 on the death of the Habsburg ruler Joseph II. More than a dubious title, though, justified the choice of these two works for Wednesday night's BBC Symphony Orchestra concert, conducted by Rudolf Barshai, and more than a harmonic compatibility, the concerto being in E flat and the cantata in C minor. Both works swept before us strong and vital, and be returned beautiful in their centrepieces.

In the concerto, Stephen Bishop-Kovacevich found for the start of the slow movement a miraculous textured pianissimo, at once clear and opaque, like frosted glass, and seeming to hold the music stationary. He then quickly, and rightly, turned away from a manner that could have appeared precious if prolonged, but he returned to it for the breathtaking

transition to the finale, so that as soon as the rondo was under way he could snatch back the veils and ride off at a cantering pace, his rhythms upright and secure.

The memorial cantata, possibly the best piece Beethoven wrote before his mid-twenties, is no mere pious homage but a genuine expression of the grim concern any radical young man must have felt at the death of Europe's most enlightened monarch within a year of the storming of the Bastille. Its big C minor choruses are already moving out of conventional tragic grandeur into the personal realms that Beethoven was to find in his local name of Morena, his local name of Morena, his local name of Morena, his local name of Morena.

One thing the cantata lacks — inevitably, given its purpose — is a rousing conclusion, and very cleverly that was supplied by a march and chorus from *The Ruins of Athens*, bringing us back to imperial E flat and also reminding us once more of the present vigour and wholeness of the BBC Symphony Chorus.

Paul Griffiths

Sensitive texture

Phemios Trio

Purcell Room

Nowadays we tend to assume that a composer such as Max Bruch wrote in a sub-Brahmsian dialect, yet this is probably to miss the point. The three movements from his *Acht Stücke*, Op 83, which the Phemios Trio of Amsterdam began their concert on Wednesday had a lyricism of their own, a vein of melodic inventiveness and a style of writing for clarinet, violin and piano considerably different from that of the greater composer. At some points one was briefly reminded of Elgar.

This, in any case, is a good team, each player having a fine technique and well-developed sensitivity to ensemble textures. These qualities were even apparent in a piece by the contemporary Dutch composer Tristan Keuris simply called *Musik*. This, exploits the medium resourcefully, and is shaped by a sombre, overpowering violence. Though the drama is quite convincing, there is no originality here.

this excellent programme were all of maximum originality in their own times, although when Stravinsky arranged his *L'Histoire du Soldat* music for violin, clarinet and piano he extensively recomposed it.

The influence of raptime, and also in America by 1917 yet still new in Europe at that time, is acknowledged in the movement headed "Tango-Valse-Rag", but in fact runs through the suite. The Phemios Trio's rhythmic acuity was therefore much appreciated.

Mozart's very different stylistic requirements for his Trio K. 498 were also well met, especially in the opening Andante. This has a delightful clarity and grace. With its cadenzas for clarinet and violin, Bartok's *Contrasts* is far more virtuosic in conception, although the music is just as closely argued. The performance was again notably confident and spontaneous, however, with the quick outer movements generating, through their rhythmic displacements, a stinging intensity.

Max Harrison



Ngema (left) and Mtwa: careers transformed

Background: "Woza Albert"

Townships in life

Woza Albert, South Africa's most successful play in the last couple of years, was conceived as an attempt to call the bluff of the Dutch Reformed Church, the spiritual bastion of apartheid. It dramatizes a visit to the country by Christ, known by his local name of Morena. Predictably the bluff is called, the politicians find he is too much of an awkward customer and Morena is allied with the struggle for black liberation in a concluding scene in which he raises folk heroes like Albert Luthuli and Steve Biko from the grave.

Its success before integrated audiences at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and on tour round the townships has been immense, enough to prompt the producers to take the show to Europe, the United States, in August to the Edinburgh Festival and in September to the Riverside Studios in London. Next Tuesday BBC 1's *Everyman* is showing a large section of the play and portrays how it evolved.

That evolution began in local theatricals in the black townships where Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa first met. We grew to like each other and we both felt we needed to do something more satisfying theatrically, explains Mtwa.

Both are atheist children of Christian families and identify with some bitterness the role of faith in the maintenance of apartheid — "everything is done in the name of God". They put together a rough version of the show and eventually managed to interest Barney Simon, co-founder of the Market's resident group The Company. He sent them back to look more closely at the South Africans they portrayed and then he worked at pulling the play into shape.

Simon's adoption of the

play transformed the careers of both actors. Previously they had moved from show to show in the townships but now they had a major city theatre and, most important of all, a creative home.

The run began with everybody concerned expecting censorship at some stage. Nothing happened. The usual process is for a member of the audience to complain to the authorities but they heard nothing and remain, so far, unsatisfied.

To white audiences now growing accustomed to a steady flow of creative work from blacks, it was a success. To black audiences it was an affirmation of their system. Simon had worked hard to sharpen the edges of the caricatures of blacks and whites and the result produced such delighted recognition in the townships that the play regularly played 15 or 20 minutes longer than in Johannesburg.

Dressed in truck suit trousers and pinpoints, Mtwa and Ngema use few props — the odd additional item of clothing, tea chests for seats and ping-pong balls for their noses when they are playing whites — and employ a variety of languages, though for non-South African audiences there will be some translation. Whether this recipe exports successfully remains to be seen, but in this country at least, the immediacy and familiarity of the political issues should overcome the unfamiliarity of the range of reference.

But, for Simon, there is no problem of communication anywhere: "South Africa is full of life, the life in the streets of the townships, and that's what's in this play. That's what people will remember when they see it."

Bryan Appleyard

Theatre

Whispered lessons

A Little Like Drowning

Warehouse, Croydon

Anthony Minghella's *A Little Like Drowning* is obviously a labour of love, a memorial to the turbulence of an Italian domestic heritage that stretches from the heat of Italy to the cold and damp of England and Ireland. It has so much familiar intricacy, with scenes from the past, and four generations of characters at many different points of their lives, that Mr Minghella has felt obliged to provide a family tree.

An even clearer statement of his intentions is in the dedication he prints to the memory of his grandmother. It is not a fashionable sort of drama that he offers her, taking as its concerns the sanctity of marriage and the ramifications of a broken Roman Catholic marriage, but he offers several different levels of understanding. That diversity means that at least one level will speak with feeling to many different audiences.

The grandmother of the play remembers events which are represented dramatically, so that the fiasco of her wedding night in Italy is tenderly staged with Jenny Howe transformed in a moment from a crotchety woman of 72 to a skittish bride. Haluk Bilginer is established as the Anglo-Italian husband in that scene, established first as a creature of memory and then establishing his own existence so that he darts in and out of the action, taking a mistress and finally running away to Dublin with her.

The characters remembered into being become independent of the memory, yet in the present continue with the grandmother speaking to her youngest grandchild, passing down her experience and even theological speculation to the only willing listener. Mr Minghella's play, benefiting from the

● The English National Opera revival of *La Bohème* at the Coliseum, which Hilary Finch reviewed on this page last week, was directed by Peter Forster. Jean-Claude Auvray, who was responsible for the original production, has not supervised the current run of performances.

sympathy of Rod Lewin's production, is so delicate in its concern with each character that it often exudes understanding at the expense of drama. While lives go tragically astray in the search for happiness, Mr Minghella seeks to pass on lessons whispered across the generations. For the most part, he makes those whispers matter more than dramatics.

Ned Chaillet

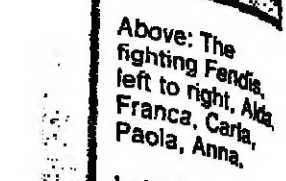
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Take a new look at THE LISTENER

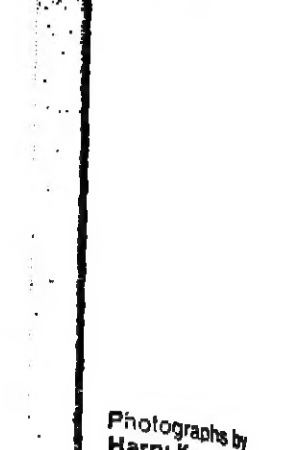
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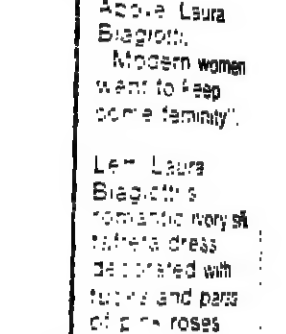
Above: The fighting Fendis, left to right, Aldo Franca, Carla, Paola, Anna.



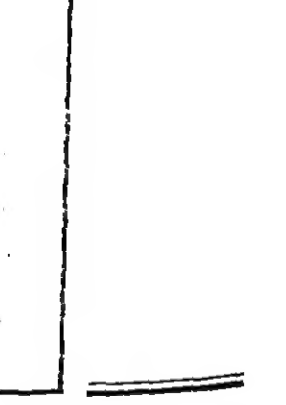
Left: Fendi's short coat and a patched cape made from a mosaic of dyed squirrel pieces with a bold plaid lining.



Photographs by Harry Kerr.



Above: Laura Biagiotti. Modern women want to keep some femininity.



Left: Laura Biagiotti's romantic ivory st. dress decorated with flowers and pearls of the roses.

EXHIBITIONS

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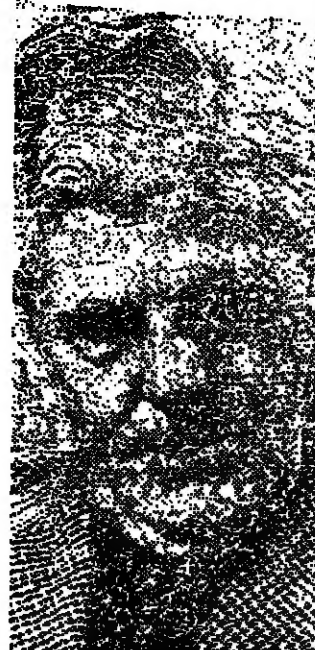
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Garfield Todd, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia from 1953 to 1958, favoured the gradual advancement of Africans to equality with whites. He instituted the commission which proposed freehold tenure for Africans in towns and the abolition of the pass system.

Uneasiness among his cabinet colleagues led to his being ousted from the leadership of the United Rhodesia Party and the premiership, and as the policies of white supremacy intensified, Todd became increasingly isolated. In 1972 he was detained under security regulations and was restricted to his ranch until 1976.

He was a political adviser to Joshua Nkomo's delegation to the Lancaster House constitutional negotiations that led to Zimbabwe's independence and is now a senator in Zimbabwe's parliament.



Multi-racial seating in Zimbabwe: blacks make up 97 per cent of the population.

Why one-party rule would work

Zanla and Zipra, the military arms of the people, fought not just to change the name of our country but to clear the way for revolutionary changes in its politics, economics and social structures. Rhodesia was a white man's country, Zimbabwe is a land for all her people, 97 per cent of whom are black. Success must be measured by the degree of change, by the benefit which this brings in the life of the people. For example, in 1980 there were 800,000 children in school. Now we have 1,600,000 scholars.

In the past the 800,000 extra children would have been loitering around the villages because there was no place for them in school. Schools are full: schools are over-full: all through the country schools are being built. There is hope and morale is high. The largest vote in our budget is not for the army but for education.

Free medical care — not as adequate as we would like nor as good as it will be — is available to all people who earn less than Z\$150 (about £114) a month. This means most people, for although minimum wages have doubled there are economic limits which are not subject to government control.

And how is the health of the economy? Lord Carrington said recently: "Considering how Zimbabwe got its independence and the problems the country was facing, the Government has made enormous progress economically and politically." David Rockefeller said he was impressed with what he had seen and commented: "Potential investors must be encouraged to come to Zimbabwe and see for themselves". When such comments are made by such men what can I add but "Amen?"

Visitors judge from the figures supplied to them, I reach a similar conclusion by observing the improvement in the life-style of the people. Policies of "sharing" of "socialism", of free primary education and health services, of much better wages, have already raised living standards in the homes to such a marked degree that the suppliers and manufacturers of bread, sugar, milk, meat, cooking oil, blankets, shoes and clothing cannot meet the demand.

As for newsprint, there is a chronic shortage. Daily paper circulation has soared, and the extra 800,000 children in school have an insatiable appetite for exercise books. Most people are better fed and better clothed but the revolution only starts there. The real change, the matter of supreme importance, was to restore dignity to the people, to let a new day dawn. Now there is no longer "white" land and "black" land, no longer white privilege and black queues.

The first people's government has made dynamic changes which can be seen everywhere. In 1980 whites held all senior posts in the civil service. Now 13 blacks and 17 whites are permanent secretaries, 43 blacks and 41 whites are deputy secretaries, 49 blacks and 38 whites are under-secretaries. All editors of our papers are blacks, and from the thousands of our people who are returning from universities around the world and from our own universities are emerging new leaders in industry, commerce and agriculture.

Mr Ian Smith and those who follow him look at these changes with deep apprehension: thousands have left and this is sad but inevitable. Change had to come and

those whites who were able to understand and who are ready to take their place as committed Zimbabweans are accepted with a measure of generosity and respect which was not expected or foreseen in the days of the war. The Lancaster House agreement gave the whites protection in land rights, in the civil service and in political representation. Whites have never recognized that privilege was transient and dangerous and that their safest course would be to renounce it and identify themselves with the blacks as full citizens, not making special demands but offering their important skills and experience to the new Zimbabwe.

But what about socialism and Marxism? The economy

The key to democracy is not necessarily a multi-party system... the freedom of a man to vote for his representative at regular intervals is what matters.

is a mixed one and will remain so, whether that is good or bad. From the level of cabinet ministers to the humblest of our people, the human nature has been changed. It is a living and viable country, established in freedom at the cost of 27,000 precious lives. I have known Joshua Nkomo with affection and respect for 30 years. I deeply regret his present suffering. It would have been simpler for us if our liberty had been won by one army of 50,000 men instead of Zanla with 30,000 and Zipra with 20,000 — the forces of these two armies met at one point on

my ranch so I knew them both. Now the two armies and, incredibly, units of the Rhodesian forces have been amalgamated into our National Army — a united and stable force. This reassuring fact should be set against the discovery of arms for 5,000 men but with no men to use them and no evidence of a plot.

In the bitterness of the moment Dr Nkomo's men will stay in Government, a triumph for the good sense of Nkomo and the responsible conduct of the Prime Minister. Change I welcome. A one-party state I can accept. It is the liberty of the individual to speak openly and to vote in secret. A one-party state could well be our best form of government for it would bring together the mass of our people who have similar political aspirations but who might divide on the grounds of tribe and personalities.

I have worked with the people for 48 years and I am confident that Zimbabwe will remain stable and prosperous. This conviction is firmly based on my intimate knowledge of many thousands of young men and women who have passed through Dadasa School. It is reinforced by my knowledge of such leaders as Josiah Tongogara of Zanla and of his friend Jason Moyo of Zipra, both now resting together in Heroes' Acre.

My faith in Zimbabwe is buttressed by the actions and speeches of a great man, Robert Gabriel Mugabe and by my belief that the people of Zimbabwe will never lack the leadership of dynamic and dedicated men and women.

Each country has its own problems to face and certainly have ours. The discovery of caches of arms sufficient to equip 5,000 men has caused uproar, confusion and political storm. But there have been no mass arrests, no riots. Trouble there is, but not disaster. The Government has really not felt at risk and this should be reassuring.

For 20 years we have had political rivalries, there have been minor tragedies and great sadness but we are a living and viable country, established in freedom at the cost of 27,000 precious lives. I have known Joshua Nkomo with affection and respect for 30 years. I deeply regret his present suffering. It would have been simpler for us if our liberty had been won by one army of 50,000 men instead of Zanla with 30,000 and Zipra with 20,000 — the forces of these two armies met at one point on

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Putting the President in his proper place

David Watt

The muddle about whether President Reagan was really invited to address the British Parliament, and if so, whether in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords or in Westminster Hall, has been magnified.

Like Trooping the Colour, it is the kind of thing the British do best, with every one moving into his place with well-drilled precision and a natural sense of occasion. The Government picture of courteous embarrassment, the Opposition huffing and puffing, the Speaker expressing stagey bewilderment. The Daily Telegraph admonishing the White House for bad manners, and a steady susurrus of crowd noises in which only the names of de Gaulle, Churchill and King William Rufus can be faintly but incessantly heard.

All very cheering. But admiration for a great performance should not be allowed to obscure the underlying and still unanswered question — which is whether, to put it crudely, we need to butter up President Reagan, and if so should we like Disraeli, "lay it on with a trowel."

If we were a less inhibited society situated somewhere to the south and east it would be easy. We should just give our guest the best of everything, including Westminster Hall, simply because he was our guest. But since we are living in a Protestant country between the 50th and 60th North latitudes we make distinctions and grade our visitors, and that being so, it is a serious matter to calculate how important they are to us, how much we owe them, and how much we want from them.

The majority of the Labour Party, united on this subject, at least, with Mr Foot, would presumably argue that we owe Mr Reagan nothing — rather the reverse, since he has exported high interest rates to us because of an obsession with defence spending, and is busy spoiling the West's relations with the Third World on our behalf. And we want nothing from him except, very implausibly, that he should desist from these transgressions and complete disarmament negotiations with the Russians as rapidly as possible.

The defence of Western Europe is an American interest, and in any case Europe is over-defended, considering the unlikelihood of a Soviet attack. In these circumstances, the President is entitled to a little frigid courtesy as the head of a supposed state — a supposed state with the Queen and a glass or two of hock in the Royal Box at Covent Garden (heaven knows we pay enough for the place); but on the whole we would much

rather he flew straight on to Dublin.

Mrs Thatcher takes a very different view. She evidently believes that we owe Mr Reagan a great deal — the inspiration of a monetarist with the courage of his convictions, the support of a doughty opponent of communism and Soviet expansion, and much besides. What features larger still in the calculations of the Government, however, is the need to keep the United States fully committed to the defence of Western Europe and therefore convinced that the allies are equally committed to the United States.

Given the present tensions over the Middle East, Poland, economic sanctions against the Soviet Union, and burden-sharing in the alliance, there is a serious risk that American public opinion would turn against Europe and that we should see Congress enacting the kind of punitive troop cuts in Europe envisaged in the 1960s by Senator Mike Mansfield. This can be headed off by demonstrations of loyalty and affection in Europe, and alongside the placards and demonstrations of anti-Americanism and neutralism that will undoubtedly line some of the streets.

The hinge of this dispute (insofar as it is not merely a contrast of instinctive pro-



Mr Reagan: do we really need to butter him up?

and anti-American reactions) is a judgement about how the balance of the argument is tilting in Washington. This is by no means a simple calculation. At first sight, the "anti-Americans" constitute a formidable body of opinion just now.

First there are the new right-wing Republican congressmen and senators who came in on the Reagan coat-tails. These are not so much isolationists in the old sense as unsophisticated and inexperienced and they are suffering from a violent nationalist fever caught amid the humiliations of Vietnam and Watergate.

They reflect, on an exalted plane, the sentiments of the man on the Milwaukee omnibus which are that America has been abused and that long, that we ought to "shape up" or else.

Next there are the Californians, from whose windows the Pacific is the normal view, and who have come to Washington in the President's train with their heads full of supply-side economics and ambitions to cash in on the growth of the Asian economies (which make Europeans by comparison look so effete).

Then there are the blue-water strategists. Republicans, for complicated historical reasons, have been wedded to the US navy, and the US navy has been more

interested in the Pacific than the Atlantic, which has been furrowed in the past to inconvenient extent by the British navy. The tendency of this combination to favour Pacific over Atlantic operations in the fight for resources was a thorn in the side of Churchill during the Second World War, and has to some extent continued to this day.

It is reinforced, moreover, by appeals to famous and respectable intellectual progenitor, Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, whose seminal nineteenth century views about the significance of sea power have become fashionable again in some Pentagon circles. Mahan's ideas were original and comprehensive, but the one that finds the most important echo under present circumstances is the notion that the US is, geographically speaking, really a gigantic island power.

In Mahan's day this island was self-sufficient, but now it is not; it is forced, like Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to bear a lonely burden of world power, mainly as sea, in order to protect its internal base.

Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defence, probably has to be counted as a member of this group, moderate one. He is a highly civilised and intelligent man, but his great hero is the younger Pitt, whose coalition against revolutionary France was a ramshackle affair of considerably less significance than his perception of the necessity to raise the French on grounds of British interest.

It is easy to suppose that against this confederacy the traditional alliance of multilateralists is outgunned. But the struggle is much more evenly matched in terms of men and matériel than it looks. There is the State Department and the Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, with his Nato background. There is the East Coast establishment of the post-war years, aging but still powerful; there is the Coast press and television centred in New York; there is the financial and industrial world whose investment markets are still heavily Europe-oriented; and there is the ethnic vote which, while it has the refugee's contempt for those left behind, is also determined that Europe should not fall under Soviet hegemony.

That is really the point. In the end, however desirable it may seem to combat communist expansion in the Far East and Africa, however dangerous the situation in the Middle East, it is in Europe that the main panoply of the Soviet Union is arrayed.

In a period of détente, Mansfieldism is a possibility, but the more menacing the Russians appear to be, the less possible it becomes to take risks with European defence. A successful Mansfield "amendment" of today might possibly earmark forces in Europe for switching to the Middle East in case of emergency, but the chances of a radical withdrawal are remote in the extreme.

That is no argument, of course, for Mrs Thatcher not being nice. A successful Reagan on personal grounds or out of admiration for his country. It merely means that she is not absolutely obliged to give him Westminster Hall for reasons of state.

The author is Director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House. He writes here in a personal capacity.

Could Roy belong to Glasgow?

by Willie Hamilton MP

As an Englishman, I have survived for 32 years as the MP for West (now Central) Fife. So why shouldn't Mr Roy Jenkins, one-time Chancellor of the Exchequer, one-time President of the EEC, and one-time member of the Labour Party, win a parliamentary seat in Glasgow week? If the Scots can accept English folk like Mrs Judith Hart and myself, surely they can embrace a Welshman like Mr Jenkins?

The Scots might be nationalists, but they are internationalists too. They have colonized the world. They have provided more British MPs in the last 100 years per million of population than England and Wales. There must be at least 50 Scottish-born MPs in the House of Commons representing English constituencies. And the Queen is partial to the tartan with more than a touch of Scots blood in her veins.

So what could be more natural than to welcome such an intellectual heavyweight as Mr Jenkins? He may not be able to roll his Rs like a Scot. He may prefer claret to whisky. He may not be able to quote Rabbi Burns, or cut much of a figure in a kilt. Maybe he could learn to play the bagpipes and dance a Highland reel. There is a lot of cultural education to be done, once the by-election is won.

And there is the rub. Roy has to convince those tough Glaswegians that he is one of them, or can be one of them in due time.

When I went to Fife I went from a miner's home in Durham to a mining seat in Fife. I could speak the same language. My way of life was the same. I felt at home. I was not an intruder. I was not a carpet bagger. I was invited by the West Fife miners to be the Labour candidate in 1945 after they had failed to find a Scot to

fight the sitting Communist MP, Willie Calisher. And I have been in Fife ever since. Most of my best friends are Fifers.

So there is hope for Roy. He, too, is the son of a miner — a Welsh miner. But there the similarity ends. For him, Hillhead is simply a means to an end. If vanishing ambition is to be satisfied by stepping on necks, then the stepping stones may just as well be in Glasgow as anywhere else.

Roy had a miss at Warrington. He frightened the Labour Party, and the Tories

were never in the running. The Welsh origins were not an obvious drawback; nor the peculiar posh accent; but it must have grated a bit. The lack of any coherent policies seemed to be no handicap. Why should it be in Glasgow?

As a parliamentarian and a minister, Mr Jenkins had an impressive record. Whatever his denigrators may say, I can honestly concede that I never heard him make a bad speech in the House on anything, in any capacity. He is an eloquent speaker, and an outstanding debater; when

he was winding up a debate you could sit back in confidence knowing that he would demolish the opposition. No one should underestimate Mr Jenkins or write him off. He is a considerable political figure still. His principles are sufficiently flexible to enable him to change them from day to day, and from one audience to another. What he said in Warrington he does not say in Glasgow. That is the great advantage of belonging to a party without policies or leader, whose camp followers can yell at Tory and Labour alike: "a plague on both your houses".

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The night deceive for a time. But the day of reckoning is bound to come. It may arrive for Mr Jenkins on Thursday.

In war, in peace you need his help

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Book men buy back a future

The seven senior partners in London's largest literary agency, Curtis Brown, are buying the business back from the City financiers who have owned it since 1967. Their purchase included some of the most richly-endowed literary estates, including those of C. S. Lewis, W. H. Auden, John Steinbeck, Elizabeth Bowen, Joyce Cary, R. C. Sheriff and A. A. Milne, the last still an industry in itself.

Curtis Brown was founded in 1899 by (Albert) Curtis Brown, until then the London correspondent of a New York paper. His son, Spencer, sold it in a £165,000 cash-and-share deal in 1967, to Industrial Finance and Investment, which later became the Darnley Day Group and was in its turn taken over by Jacob Rothschild's RIT a couple of years ago.

The change in ownership now represents a recognition by the money men that literature might after all be left in the hands of men (and women) concerned with letters rather than figures. It will not affect Curtis Brown's working relationship with the host of living authors the agency represents, such as Patrick White, John Betjeman, Samuel Beckett, David Lodge and Frederick Forsyth.

The newly independent company will, though, incorporate Spokesmen, an associated firm dealing with writers, directors and designers in film, television and theatre. The chairman will be Richard Odgers, whose speciality is films and West End plays. The joint managing directors will be Michael

THE TIMES DIARY

Bugs Bunny has been to Cambridge University. He has also had a well-attended reception at the American Embassy in London, and today will be visiting the Great Ormond Street children's hospital. Meanwhile his friend Daffy Duck has been on a waddle round St. James's Park.

Shaw, who represents Antonia Fraser, Robert Lacey, Malcolm Bradbury and Gore Vidal; and Peter Murphy who almost monopolizes theatre directors.

What price RIT have set on the well filled package I cannot disclose but while acknowledging that the financial investors have been "very decent" one of the newly-liberated directors did say: "It feels like it will be Lent for ever."

Piet Dankert, the Dutch socialist who is now president of the European Parliament, fosters relations with the press by dinners after each week, after an excellent dinner (three courses, two wines). British representatives asked him how he would vote if he were voting in Britain at the next general election. Dutch came the reply: "Social Democrat of course."

Lancashire lilt

When discussing world affairs with Margaret Thatcher at Chequers

The two Loony Tune characters, regularly from a Marriott theme park in California, are here to publicize the tourist attractions of the Santa Clara area. They are, of course, elaborate costumes and make-up by humans, whose anonymity is carefully preserved by a typically American security system. The creatures are allowed to go nowhere unaccompanied.

Today, Helmut Schmidt will be speaking fluent slightly American English. Yet he once had a strong Lancashire accent.

As a boy he spent a term in 1932 at a school in Manchester, and says that 20 years later was still finding it difficult to correct his pronunciation.

On the wall of his bungalow in the grounds of the Chancellery is a cutting of an interview he gave to the Manchester Evening Chronicle at the time. He was paid a guinea for it, which compared handsomely with the 30 pennings a week pocket money he was used to at home.

Cereal rights

The Bishop of Truro wins applause for his Grace (quoted here yesterday) using other people's material. The thanksgiving prayer preferring corn flakes to porridge comes from A Book of Graces, published by the Women's Institute, and won an even bigger round of applause when used by Peter Jay, on breakfast television, at an occasion

organized some time ago by the Women's Advertising Club of London.

Cat fancier

A Toulouse-Lautrec painting of the Irish singer May Belfort comes up for sale at Sotheby's on March 31. She is shown at the Café-Concert des Décaolles dressed as a child and holding a small black cat, so she is presumably singing the song which made her famous: I've got a little cat, I'm very fond of that.

Appropriate to the menu, though, Sotheby's say that her real fancy was for frogs, snakes and scorpions and that she had a sadistic nature. Lautrec, of course, found her so fascinating that he produced five portraits, six lithographs and a poster of her within a few months.

Stepping up

Djan Tatlian is about to become the first Russian defector to top the bill at Las Vegas. Tatlian, a singer, described as Moscow's matinee idol and had sold 52 million records before he escaped to the West in 1974.

How he is relaunching his career, has been booked by the Bures Hotel to lead their floor show, and is to be singing in English on the BBC's Russian service.

Checking facts

PHS promises that information he relays on the impending contest for the editorship of the New Statesman is a great deal less speculative than that magazine's own suggestion. In this week's issue, that Jeremy Thorpe is

considering applying for the editorship of its SDP-Liberal rival, The Democrat. Respectfully PHS suggests the NS board looks for an editor who will persuade the staff to check the facts first.

Theoretically the Barbican Centre is once more accepting credit card bookings for performances, but PHS warns: the wife of one senior executive here spent the whole of Wednesday and most of yesterday morning trying to get through to the box office without success.

Prime mimic

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, is a great mimic, according to his son James, who is quoted in this week's Woman's World. James says his father imitated Donald Coggan, to such good effect over the telephone that he fooled a fellow bishop who was playing truant from a Church of England conference. The lax prelate was packing his bags to hurry back before the impersonation was confessed.

Diary Quiz

This week's news teasers:

1. Who tried to expose an indecency legally and was faced with a flop?
2. Who was diverted after being struck by lightning?
3. Where were 69 lords found "leaving"?
4. Which press baron is still mixed up with the harlots?

Answers on Monday.

PHS



P.O. Box 7, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ. Telephone: 01-837 1234

LAW AND ORDER

One of the most cherished traditions of the police in Britain is that they are a force established to exercise power on behalf of the community, not over the community. It follows therefore that the police should be responsible to the community for the power that they exercise on its behalf. But there is another tradition that is no less important: operational independence for the police. This principle, has recently been expressed most cogently by Lord Scarman in his report on the Brixton riots: "Neither politicians nor pressure-groups nor anyone else may tell the police what to do or how to do it, or how to enforce the law or not in particular cases, or how to investigate a particular offence". This principle is necessary partly for efficient policing but even more to avoid what Lord Scarman described as "manipulation and abuse of the law, whether for political or private ends".

The practical question is how to reconcile these two requirements for good policing. Operational independence for the police is accepted in principle, but the method of accountability varies between London and the rest of the country. The Metropolitan Police are responsible to the Home Secretary; elsewhere the police are accountable to police committees composed of local councillors and magistrates. It is this latter arrangement that has provoked the criticism of Mr James Anderson, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester.

Mr Anderson fears that these committees are being used as instruments for securing control over the police by political extremists. He would wish to give magistrates at least half the mem-

bership of these committees, or better still abolish such committees in favour of non-political regional police boards, which would however have a "political input" and be responsible to Parliament. Mr Anderson is right to fear political control over the police, from whatever quarter such a threat might come. But he has not suggested the right remedy. Satisfactory accountability needs to be both local and to a body the majority of whose members are elected representatives. This must mean through the agency of local government. Many people may agree with this in principle but be horrified at the capacity and apparent motives of some local councillors who are given the responsibility. Such critics have a point, but the way to seek safeguards against unjustifiable abuse is not to try to bypass local councillors. They are the people thrown up by the local democratic process, and if someone is to speak and act in a representative role on behalf of the community he needs to be elected.

The better course is to seek to define more precisely the limits to the jurisdiction of such committees. They have the right, subject to the approval of the Home Secretary, to appoint chief constables and before making such appointments they may reasonably question him on the strategy of policing that he would employ. It is the duty of a chief constable to report periodically to his police committee, who again may reasonably scrutinize his policy and express any anxieties on behalf of the local community, and a wise chief constable will weigh very carefully what is said. But this process must stop short of giving a chief constable instructions or implied instructions on operational

matters. If a police committee is not prepared to observe such restraint then there remains in the background the discretion of the Home Secretary, whose approval would be required for any effective action to be taken against a chief constable. Provided that there is a general appreciation of the proper frontier between the power of the police committee and that of the police themselves, a determined chief constable is not without reasonable safeguards.

There remains the anomaly of the different arrangements for accountability for the Metropolitan Police. To some extent this is justified by the difference in responsibilities. The Metropolitan Police are more than a local force: they have special duties because they operate in the capital and they have some national tasks as well. They have a leadership role and they provide various forms of assistance for other forces. That is the reason why they need to be directly accountable to the Home Secretary.

But if they are more than a local force, they are nonetheless a local force. This is not provided for in present arrangements. Mr Callaghan, speaking as a former Home Secretary as well as Prime Minister, suggested this week that there should be a new authority on which local authorities would be represented as well as the Home Office. Ultimate responsibility for this force must remain with the Home Secretary, but it is desirable that the London boroughs be associated with the process of accountability. If such a change were made there would be a reasonable structure of accountability throughout the country. It would then be a matter of applying the spirit as well as the letter.

SHAMROCK AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Whatever private reservations the British Government may have about President Reagan's attitude towards other of the world's trouble spots, they can have no complaint about his attitude towards Northern Ireland. Like his predecessors he is scrupulously correct. From a position of benevolent detachment he follows their lead in declining to take a hand, confining the policy content of any remarks he makes to matters which are explicitly agreed between the British and the Irish governments, expressing American interest in the economic regeneration of the region, and discouraging American citizens from contributing to funds destined to reach the Provisional IRA. During this presidency also the FBI is proceeding with evident success against illegal trade in arms to Ireland.

When Mr Haughey, newly

restored to office, went to Washington for St Patrick's day (a voyage which says much about another "Irish dimension"), taking the national leader out of the country on the national day, he may have expected Mr Reagan to be a bit more forthcoming. Have not the President's roots been dug up in Ballyporeen? But the Republican chief executive is more developed in Mr Reagan than the Tipperary man.

Mr Haughey, whose line is that nothing useful can be done about Northern Ireland except by the two governments acting severally or jointly, said at his luncheon at the White House, "There is much to be done. And the first thing is that Britain be encouraged to seek more positively and persuade more actively a change in attitudes and outlooks which would pave the way for unity and so

enable her local withdrawal from Ireland to take place with honour and dignity."

In other words Mr Reagan should twist Mrs Thatcher's arm till she twists the arm of Ulster unionists. Mr Haughey had the mortification of receiving a reply which sounds as if it was inspired if not actually scripted by Dr Garret Fitzgerald. A solution could only be found, the President said, through "a process of reconciliation between the two traditions in Northern Ireland and between Britain and Ireland". He laid emphasis on continuing reduction in the level of violence as a condition for reconciliation. He repeated that it is the parties themselves that must compose their differences and it is not for the United States to lay down the lines on which they should do it. No mention of unification. Quite a good St Patrick's day for St George.

SOMEONE WHO STILL LOVES RUSSIANS

Anyone looking at the world through the Kremlin windows must feel that Russia is a very friendless country, unloved by almost every other country. Yet, wherever there are more friendly relations, the world's largest countries, barely a handful of African and Middle Eastern leaders, would fill the list of those who come to Moscow with unfeigned enthusiasm. This is the context in which Russia loves India: its non-alignment is not cool and detached but ready to see where and how the Russians are wronged by their enemies. Whatever emerges from Marshal Ustinov's visit, with his formidable retinue of thirty generals, it will confirm, as did Mr Brezhnev's three visits to New Delhi in the past decade — that the Russians feel better after a draught of Indian friendship.

Genuine warmth first entered the relationship when Mr Nehru was affronted by the cold war and tried to interpose his country as a mediator, insisting that in many ways the Russians were not the threat they seemed in Washington. Ever since, the rooted tendency in the Nehru entourage to see the best in the Russians has endured, even though the reality in the

relationship has gone up and down. In the sixties, when China broke with the Russians and launched a punitive assault on the Indian army over the border, there were good reasons for mutual propping up. Mr Brezhnev saw in India the cornerstone of a collective security system for Asia which would contain China. Then the relationship sagged as India began to resent Russian naval strength in the Indian Ocean. But when East Pakistan burst into crisis and India feared a war with Pakistan, Mrs Gandhi was ready to sign a friendship treaty in Moscow.

With Pakistan's defeat and Bangladesh a friend to India, Russia was less necessary. Then President Nixon's visit to Peking aroused Russian anxieties, so Mr Brezhnev's stay in Delhi in 1973 was built up to comfort Russian opinion. Through the period of Mrs Gandhi's emergency, her electoral defeat, a less warm Mr Desai and then Mrs Gandhi's return to power in 1980, the visits were kept up more from the Russian side than from the Indian. In the last two years, however, Afghanistan has brought disappointment to the Russians. India was willing to explain to others that Russia was not so

be condemned outright; even in some small ways to be excused; but the offence was too undeniable for the leader of the world's non-aligned movement to do anything but distance herself in disapproval. Having failed to win the Indians then, the Russians may now look to India as the best mediator when opportunity offers.

It has been suggested that one motive of Marshal Ustinov's visit is to deflect some Indian military purchasing from Europe to Russia; or that he is anxious to assure the Indians that any forthcoming changes in the Soviet leadership will not lessen Moscow's attachment. For an India somewhat isolated by Islamic togetherness and cut off from East Asia by a very different outlook, Russian friendship fills a gap, too, since the only alternative would be a warm embrace from an American president landing in Delhi, and that has never seemed very likely. Hence India and Russia will stay fairly close. There are benefits in the relationship for both, and no cause for other countries to be disturbed. India's relations with Britain and other European countries are not reduced thereby.

Bir Zeit University

From Mr David Astor and others
Sir, We wish to draw attention to the plight of Arab students in Israeli occupied territory whose human right to education is effectively denied by Israeli authorities, until recently in uniform, now in civilian dress. All Arab students suffer harassment, but the 2,000 who attend the University of Bir Zeit seem to be singled out for special attention. Closed last November for two months and reopened in January, Bir Zeit has now been

closed for a further two months on what are termed "security" grounds.

Tactics like this, coupled with frequent and arbitrary exercise of powers to accept or reject the appointments of lecturers, or to ban the importation of books, make it close to impossible to maintain a satisfactory academic standards, and students whose final examinations must be taken this summer are penalized for no fault of their own.

We would like to appeal to all who care for academic freedom to add their protests to those of

Jewish Israelis, academics and others, who have braved the tear gas and upheld the honour of Israel by demonstrating in solidarity with the University of Bir Zeit.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID ASTOR,
KENNETH CRAGG,
W K HAYMAN,
ELIZABETH MONROE,
JANA RICHMOND,
J B RICHMOND,
JOHN A T ROBINSON,
As from Trinity College, Cambridge.

Strengthening European element in Western defence

From Dr Robert McGeehan

Sir, The recent French suggestion for a stronger European role in Western security matters (leading article, March 16) is but the latest in a succession of Paris-inspired flirtations with the same seductive temptation (one recalls the 1950 Pleven Plan, the 1952 European Defence Community agreement, the Fouchet Plans of the early 1960s and, most analogous, the 1973 suggestions of Monsieur Michel Jobert who urged use of Western European Union as the vehicle for an enhanced political-military role for an independent Europe).

Without pausing on the debatable validity of "Europe" as a collective ideal, or disagreeing with your conclusion that the dramatic improvement of European conventional forces could be desirable both to redress the East-West military imbalance and to reduce excessive dependence on the United States, it seems obvious that such an enormously expensive undertaking in a time of recession could not be the product of logic or common sense alone.

For Europe to break out of its docile lethargy in the security sector via the creation of military capabilities powerful enough to make her credible political force, either the Russians would have to be perceived as a much more threatening adversary, or European frustration with the United States would have to be so intense as to be anti-American.

Recent evidence does not suggest that Moscow's antics are as ominously seen in Bonn, Paris or perhaps even London as in Washington, and there is virtually no European equivalent to the emotional preoccupation with the global Soviet menace.

Yet the other catalytic agent which might propel Europe towards more independence is filled with dangers more disturbing than recent Russian behaviour. It is the possibility of its being used as a lever to produce American disillusionment, and the withdrawal of American forces or a further shredding of the already-tattered nuclear umbrella.

I share the belief that if "Europe" ever existed it will be in partial opposition, not alliance with the United States. For precisely this reason sensitive Europeans no less than sensible Americans should adamantly oppose any move towards action stations against the wrong adversary.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT MCGEEHAN,
School of International Studies, University of Southern California,
United Kingdom Program,
9 St James's Square, SW1,
March 16.

From Lord Gladwyn

Sir, All the chances are that Trident will be cancelled in what is probably less than two years' time when we shall no doubt settle for something much less expensive, if indeed we feel — on the assumption that the USA is still with us — that we want a

nuclear "deterrent" at all. There remains, however, the vital necessity for retaining a "core" European defensive system, i.e. a system which would make it clear that the Soviet Union would be unlikely to prevail in any non-nuclear European war.

For Mr Reagan, the Russians are quite unlikely to take the initiative in using or even threatening nuclear weapons. What would they gain from a devastated Europe? What risks of nuclear retaliation in Russia itself would they run? But the West, having now lost what the experts call "escalatory control", cannot make first use of a nuclear weapon either. That is why the doctrine of "flexible response" is becoming more and more intractable and out-of-date. So we must at all costs be able — and be seen to be able — to prevent the Russians from arriving on the Weser within a couple of days, or the Rhine within a week.

Can this be done? Of course it can. The first thing is for the European Ministers of Defence — or such of them as are prepared to do so — to meet regularly in some place, no matter where, to supervise and direct the efforts of officials to produce in common and *en masse* the necessary anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons and devices of the latest type: to organise the hardening of airfields and the dispersal of ships; to plan an extension of anti-submarine defences; and (above all, perhaps) to get busy with the formation of Home Guards to protect our cities and installations, more especially in Germany and the UK, against airborne assault.

I repeat, it really doesn't matter where or under what auspices such ministerial activity takes place. It could (preferably) be within the general framework of the European Council, as suggested in the Colombo-Genscher plan. It could be a revised Western European Union (which, however, really ought to be merged with the EEC and the European Parliament). It should certainly make use of the so-called "Independent European Programme Group" in Rome which is to take over from the Eurogroup in Brussels. In any event it must include the French.

For over ten years now intelligent voices have been heard in Strasbourg and Brussels advocating some such action as this. With your powerful support, perhaps they will at length prevail.

Yours truly,
GLADWYN,
House of Lords,
March 16.

From Sir Bernard Burrows

Sir, There is much to agree with in your leader on European defence (March 16), especially the objective of improving the objective of a conventional defence effort. This could only be done without unacceptable increase of cost if the Europeans were prepared to agree to more pooling and harmonization of armed forces and their equipment.

Sea bed rights

From Mr Michael Ivens

Sir, The United States is not beyond reproach in its record over the prolonged negotiations on deep sea bed mining at the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, as stated by Dr Buzan and his University of Warwick colleagues (March 17). The Carter administration, unlike some other western nations, failed to see the grave dangers of the proposals that were being put forward. These would entail setting up a giant gulch under the international Sea Bed Authority which would have absolute and exclusive control over the resources of the sea bed of the deep ocean.

The terms on which mining contracts would be granted would force the industrialist to give away his secrets to competitors and to train competitors in the use of them against him. The construction and voting arrangements for the Assembly and Council would be biased against

As regards the institutional framework, you overlook some of the problems of reviving Western European Union and you fail to mention another, perhaps more promising, recent initiative. The Assembly of Western European Union has some interesting debates on European defence matters, but it is not a directly elected body and, more important, nobody seems to pay much attention to what it says.

The inter-governmental element of WEU has been almost totally inactive. The main part of its defence responsibilities and organisation were long ago transferred to Nato, and an entirely new structure would have to be created if it were to attempt to resume this activity. Secondly, the WEU treaty contains a more stringent commitment to mutual military support than does the Nato treaty. It is unrealistic to suppose that Denmark and Greece would be willing to undertake such a new commitment.

You do not mention the Genscher-Colombo proposals for a new European Act which would among other things, authorize the existing European Council (the heads of government of the countries of the European Community) to extend the scope of political cooperation with two objectives to make military action in the field of foreign policy so that Europe's role in the world can be more commensurate with its economic and political importance; and to concert on questions of security policy in order to safeguard European independence and protect vital European interests.

This plan had the advantage of building on what is there, namely the European Council and existing machinery of political cooperation for the harmonization of foreign policy, which already deals with certain security questions, such as the preparation of European views for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is a logical extension to add defence policy to foreign policy. The two are essentially inseparable.

If on the contrary we had defence policy being dealt with by WEU and foreign policy in the Community there would be ample opportunity for confusion. Another advantage of the Genscher-Colombo plan is that the activities conducted under it would be subject to the scrutiny of the directly elected European Parliament.

There will always be anomalies of membership, whatever body is chosen. The advantage of the European Council and the political cooperation machinery is that they are formally outside the provisions of the Treaty of Rome and so are capable of flexible operation. If Ireland did not wish to participate in a discussion or activity under these structures it could simply abstain from doing so, without causing an institutional crisis.

Yours faithfully,
BERNARD BURROWS,
Steeple Farm,
Hampshire,
March 16.

the industrial nations; voting for the 36 members of the Council is quite deliberately preconditioned in favour of the Eastern (Socialist) European Region and the developing countries.

Fortunately the Reagan administration has woken up to the extreme dangers of the draft convention. The United States recognizes that there is a need for a convention, as does Britain. We should certainly support the United States in rejecting the undesirable features that I have mentioned.

It would be against the interests of the developing nations for the United States to go it alone. That is why it is important that the Law of the Sea Conference should produce agreed proposals that encourage rather than deter the development of deep sea bed mineral resources and avoid creating a monopoly of these resources by the so-called Enterprise.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL IVENS,
Director, Aims of Industry,
40 Doughty Street, WC1,
March 16.

Islamic courts

From Mr Hushang Mehr-Ayin

Sir, Viewing with great concern the fact that the accused assassins of President Sadat were tried "in complete secrecy and denied the opportunity to defend themselves fully and freely in accordance with the rules of the law and dictates of justice," Mr Ahmed Ben Bella, the well known Algerian revolutionary leader, appeals to President Mubarak of Egypt to revoke the findings of the court and order fresh trials in an open civil court (*The Times*, March 10).

I do not intend to confirm or otherwise challenge Mr Ben Bella's views on the conduct of the Cairo trials. However, since Mr Ben Bella makes his allegations in his capacity as the chairman of the International Islamic Commission for Human Rights, his commission has made any public statements on the conduct of the so-called Islamic courts in Iran which the unfortunate accused are tried not only in complete secrecy but are denied access to defence lawyers and even the opportunity to challenge the views of the judges let alone the facts presented by them.

In the Islamic revolutionary courts of Iran the judges will hear only those witnesses who come forward to speak against the accused and the evidence presented as fact is often the

opinion of the judges or witnesses. And all this is done in the name of Islamic justice which, incidentally, does not accept jurisdiction of civil courts. As an exponent of Islamic values Mr Ben Bella might do well by making public his views on the Ayatollah's faith in the dictates of justice.

Yours faithfully,
H. MEHR-AYIN,
149 Moat House Drive,
Crewe,
Cheshire,
March 11.

Gas price rises

From Mr T. D. Kelly

Sir, If gas consumers are to be no better served than it appears to be within the wit of their present chairman to serve them, then surely a satisfying if irrelevant economy could be effected by sacking her.

Domestic gas prices have risen in the West Midlands Gas Board area by 28 per cent in the last year and by 68 per cent in the last two years. To excuse lack of opposition to this as sacrificing long-term stability to short-term popularity is bordering on what might reasonably be described as wilful illogicality.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
T. D. KELLY,
Castle Lane House,
Castle Lane,
Warwick,
March 9.

Unhappiness of the clergy

From the Bishop of Oxford

Sir, Since your correspondent was kind enough to mention my part in this subject ("Unhappy Synod on this subject," February 22) perhaps you will permit me to say that in my experience of two dioceses there are many clergy of the Church of England who are far from unhappy.

Under pressures of many kind, yes — but they have a strong grasp of their calling, they enjoy great support and friendship from their congregations, and they recognize that the freedom, diversity, and human contact of their job afford them a rare privilege in the contemporary world, which is some compensation for the thinness of its financial rewards. It seems to me a slur on the clergy and their wives to imply that the majority of them are full of complaints, spoken or unspoken.

Where the unhappiness exists, however, it is altogether too facile (and unfair) to blame it upon unsuitable training in theological colleges. Is there not a deeper cause, and does it not lie in the tension between the Christian Gospel and the mental climate of our society?

According to the latter, there is nothing worse that can happen to a person than that he should suffer in some way. If he suffers, his rights are somehow being infringed, and very likely there is some "authority" to be blamed: the Government, church leaders, the Synod, and so forth. The Gospel speaks in quite different terms — terms difficult and uncongenial for modern British people to hear — about suffering and its part in the redemption of the world. It is no wonder that those whose calling is to suffer for Christ, but who remain citizens of the contemporary world, find themselves caught in a painful tug-of-war. "To the Greeks foolishness" — yes, and never more than today.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK OXON,
Bishop of Oxford,
27 Limon Road, Oxford,
March 2.

The Pope's visit

From Mr S. E. MacKenzie

Sir, It strikes me as unfortunate that, in the run-up to Pope John Paul's visit, Clifford Longley should choose to labour differences of a sort that are inevitable in the present divided state of Christianity; as when (March 8) he deplores the power enjoyed by successive Popes as being allegedly "absolute".

True, for the orthodox Roman Catholic, that power is considerable. As Vatican II has put it in one place (*Lumen gentium*, 22), "in virtue of his office as Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff possesses full, supreme, universal power over the Church, and he is always able to exercise it without impediment."

Even so he is unable to alter the constitution of the Church, and his power of definition is limited by a multitude of previous definitions due to his predecessors, to the councils and to the ordinary exercise of the Church's magisterium through the pastors united to the Holy Spirit. His power of definition is limited by a multitude of previous definitions due to his predecessors, to the councils and to the ordinary exercise of the Church's magisterium through the pastors united to the Holy Spirit.

More to our joint purpose, I believe, is to follow the inspiring lead given by Dr Runcie in placing the ecumenical importance of the visit on the beliefs and sentiments that unite us, leaving the differences to recede in due time. Surely the salient point about the forthcoming get-together is that there has never been anything like it before.

Yours, etc.,
S. E. MACKENZIE,
Refusis,
Cavendish Road,
Weybridge,
March 8.

Iran's heritage

From Mr Parviz C. Radji

Sir, The unique and priceless works of art that comprise the crown jewels of Iran (your article of March 9) are not the property of the ayatollahs to do with as they wish. They form, and will always remain, part of the national heritage of the Persian people, a fact that no legislation, Islamic or otherwise, can in any way alter.

Those who wish to participate in what is tantamount to a pillage of Iran's historic patrimony should bear in mind that in the eyes of Iran's post-Khomeini government — and there will be one sooner than many suppose — they would knowingly have dealt in stolen property.

Yours faithfully,
PARVIZ C. RADJI,
20 Holland Park Road, W14,
March 10.

Strikingly familiar

From Mr Arthur Jackson

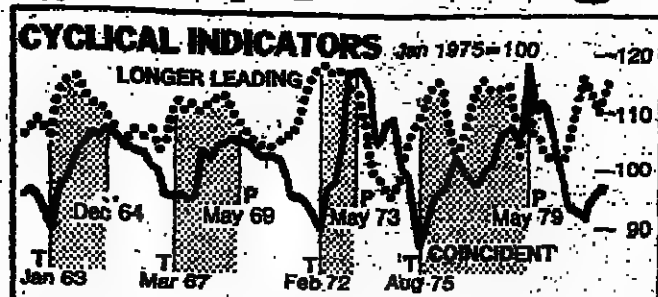
Sir, I was interested in your Foreign Staff's report (March 17) on the most welcome visit to Britain of Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman, when, quoting the Civil Aviation Authority, its spokesman said, "Lightning strikes are not all that infrequent..."

The spokesman was referring to a meteorological phenomenon but, on my many trips abroad, I have frequently observed the former variety at Heathrow's terminals 1, 2 and 3.

Yours very truly,
ARTHUR JACKSON,
5 Glenside Road,
Walls,
West Midlands,
March 17.

BUSINESS NEWS

Advancing in strength



There was a strong rise last month in the Government's composite index of "longer leading" indicators, which predict the ups and downs in the economy about a year ahead. It is the fourth consecutive monthly rise. The main reason for the February advance was the downturn in interest rates and the upturn in share prices. These are components of the composite index of longer leading indicators. The separate, "coincident" index, which shows the stage of the business cycle currently reached, has been flat since the late summer.

Trio cut lending rates

Germany, Switzerland and The Netherlands yesterday agreed together to cut their key lending rates by half a percentage point. The Dutch moved first to lower bank rate to 8 per cent, followed immediately by the German Central Bank which cut its special Lombard rate from 10 to 9 1/2 per cent. Later the Swiss National Bank announced a cut in bank rate from 6 to 5 1/2 per cent.

Third order from Oman

British Shipbuilders yesterday became the third company to announce a major contract between British industry and Oman, bringing the total value of deals during this week's State visit by the Sultan of Oman to almost £300m. Brooke Marine, the British Shipbuilders subsidiary, is to build a £20m logistic support vessel for the Sultanate's navy. Earlier, Mr Robert Atkinson, chairman emphasised to trade unions the need for continued improvement in productivity and performance.

BSC backs the Euro Route

Mr Ian MacGregor, the British Steel Corporation chairman, is trying to swing Parliamentary support behind a £3,000m Channel link project which BSC is involved in promoting with a consortium including British Shipbuilders called Euro Route Group. "It is time the present generation carried out the kind of major capital schemes and investments which will benefit not just ourselves but our children and our grandchildren", Mr MacGregor said.

Post computer

The Post Office is starting to computerise its counter services. The Trial system, costing £400,000, are to be installed in four post offices yet to be decided. Counter clerks will record customer transactions directly on computer terminals.

Mr John Quinlan, senior general manager of Barclays, is to succeed Mr Stuart Graham of Midland Bank as chairman of the chief executive officers' committee of the Committee of London Clearing Banks.

MARKET SUMMARY

About-turn for equities

LONDON EXCHANGE

FT index 558.8 up 5.4
FT 100 68.30 up 0.29
FT All Share 319.24 up 1.81
Bargains 19.78

Equities completed a smart about turn yesterday helped by a bear squeeze and lower interest rates on the Continent.

However, business was down to a trickle with more interest centred on Silver Buck's 5-1 victory in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, a regular highlight of the Stock Market's social calendar. Nevertheless, dealers went some way to repair the damage of the previous day's 11.0 fall following the news of a surprise loss and no dividend for the FT index having opened the day 1.0 higher closed 5.4 up at 558.8, but turned a further 3p to 564.2.

The decision by Stone-Platt to suspend the shares at 12p prior to calling in the receiver came as no surprise following intense speculation over the past week. GKN's return to the 3p, however, was greeted with a black face, although the chairman's cautious remarks went some way to stalling the celebrations.

A few cheap buyers were on hand to give the market a lift as the final auctioneer for the Government Index-linked stock arrived at the Bank of England. Dealings are due to start next week at a tender price of between 95p to 100p.

Turnover in the rest of the market remained on the low side with rises of up to 2 1/2 in longs while at the shorter end the improvement was limited to one of 2 1/2.

TODAY

House-Builders' Federation launches New Homes Marketing Board. London Opec meeting. Vienna UK retail prices index (February), tax and price index (February).

OTHER EXCHANGES

Tokyo: Nikkei Dow Jones 7,052.80 up 163.27.
Hongkong: Hang Seng index 1,188.20 down 3.47.

CURRENCIES

The ailing French franc dominated the markets, trading quietly on the sidelines. The pound made good gains on European currencies and the yen.

LONDON CLOSE

Sterling \$1.8100 unchanged
Index 91.1 up 0.4
DM 4.3000
Fr 11.2200
Yen 438.00
Dollar Index 114.3 up 0.5
DM 2.3745 up 30 pts
Gold \$323 up \$10

MONEY MARKETS

Rates tended to be slightly easier where changing. The Bank of England released an estimated shortage of £350m by buying £247m of bills at unchanged rates.

Domestic Rates:
Base rate 13%
3-month interbank 13 1/2-13 3/4
Euro Currency Rates:
3 month dollar 14 1/2-15 1/2
3 month DM 9 1/4-9 1/2
3 month Fr 2 1/2-2 3/4

Leading shareholders criticize banks' decision to withdraw support

No new rescue as Stone-Platt fails

DIARY OF A FAILURE

Stone-Platt, the troubled textile machinery manufacturer, collapsed yesterday only a year after the last rescue operation, organized by the Bank of England.

The receiver was called in after a week of intense discussion with the company's bankers, again involving the Bank. The final move to precipitate the collapse was immediately denounced by two of the company's institutional shareholders.

Equity Capital for Industry and M&C. Midland is Stone-Platt's leading bank. Others involved are Barclays, and its merchant bank, National Westminster, and Williams and Glyn's.

Despite the effort of Stone-Platt's management to turn around the company, the banks and institutions could not reach agreement on a rescue package.

Locally, the move came as Stone-Platt was just about to announce the sale of its loss-making textile machinery subsidiary, Platt Saco Lowell Textile Machinery (PSL) to an American buyer.

It was also about to exchange contracts for the sale and lease of its Crawley factory, and the sale of its Altringham factory for £4.5m. Borrowings are at about the full extent of the £34m facility allowed by its bankers.

These deals, it was hoped, would bring borrowings down to around £22m. With the rest of the group breaking even, Stone-Platt would have gone to its main shareholders in the autumn to raise £5m to £7m from a rights issue. But the banks wanted a reconstruction now.

Mr Leslie Pincott, Stone-Platt's chairman, said he understood the banks' attitude. "The banks were not able to access to the company's plans, even though four leading shareholders were

prepared to offer indications of assistance. "I do not blame the banks. I am just worried about the fact that the system cannot help an engineering company with technology and hard working people," he added.

The main shareholders, which include Equity Capital for Industry, which is owned by leading City institutions, Mr Brian Dean said: "ECI is shocked and dismayed that

after so much time and effort and money over two years the banks should have run away, just when a final solution was in sight."

At M & C, Mr David Hopkinson said: "I am sad that with a company that would have been profitable and viable in 1983 the banks were not prepared to have patience. The sum involved was 'chicken-feed' for the banks. He was also dismayed that they had not been prepared to back Mr Pincott,

who had done a "superb" job and was successfully turning the company around.

While second half losses at Stone-Platt were running at the same rate as in the first - around £7m - the institution believed that it would be back in profit in 1983 and able to reduce its gearing to around 60 per cent of the equity. They were prepared to participate in a rights issue later this year, but not at this stage.

The institutions believed in the growth potential of the electrical side, which supplies air-conditioning, ventilation heating and lighting for subway systems. It has orders for New York, Hong Kong, and the Middle East worth about £43m with about an equal volume of possible further orders. Other parts of Stone-Platt involved with textiles, are on course to increase business.

April 1980: Default on borrowings and forced to rearrange loans of nearly £40m. Bank of England co-ordinates talks among bankers.

November 1980: Mr Leslie Pincott takes over as chairman. Pump division sold for £11.5m.

March 1981: Second rescue operation. £10m raised through share issue.

April 1981: Third rescue package rejected by small shareholders. City institutions meet at costs of £10m injection. Losses of £15m for 1980 announced.

May 1981: Sells fixed-pitch propeller business for £3.5m.

October 1981: Chief executive Robin Taverner resigns.

March 1982: Receiver called in.

Closure costs leave GKN with net loss

GKN, the car components and engineering group, moved from a pretax loss of £1.2m in 1980 to a pretax profit of £34.6m last year.

But unrelieved overseas taxation and £24.8m of closure costs left it with a net loss for the year of £37.5m. In the previous year, the group's reserves had been depleted by £103m after rationalization costs and provisions amounting to almost £50m.

Most of the rationalization took place in the United Kingdom and last year there was a further reduction in the workforce of 14,400, including 10,000 redundancies. The remaining 4,000 jobs were those in companies which are now part of Allied Steel & Wire.

Steel said yesterday that the restructuring would continue. There would be more

divestments and possibly further plant closures this year.

Mr Trevor Holdsworth, GKN chairman, said that the present level of demand was not unreasonable to expect results for the current half year to be similar to those for the second half of last year.

Then the company had a trading surplus of more than £60m and pretax profits of £28.2m.

In spite of the heavy rationalization costs GKN has maintained its dividend at 8p net per share (at a cost of £6.5m) and reports that borrowings have been reduced. This reflects a stringent control of working capital and increased operating efficiency.

Dr Mans Saeed Oteibi, of the United Arab Emirates and Opec chairman, said that Opec may well be forced to trim output even further.

3 per cent cutback in industry's fuel bills

By Derek Hill, Commercial Editor

Esso has joined Shell in cutting fuel costs for industry and diesel fuel for transport fleets. Phillips Petroleum, which does not supply the retail trade, also moved into line last night and other big oil companies are expected to bring in similar cuts today or early next week.

The cuts, which leave the pump price of petrol at 15p, represent big savings for many industries. It can amount to between 2 and 3 per cent of fuel bills, with big users benefiting by up to £500,000 a year.

In reflecting the weak market for oil during the continuing oil glut, the cuts will further hit the oil companies' already shrunken margins. Petrol prices in the last six months have been slashed with little benefit going to industry.

Oil companies have already frozen the level of their price support for petrol retailers and want to keep retail prices

at their present level. Giving more away to the industrial sector will make the companies around £500m a year annual rate and if these are cut back petrol will rise proportionately.

Esso is clipping 2p a gallon off commercial deliveries to companies of petrol and diesel fuel with diesel cuts to service stations which should bring pump prices down 2.5p a gallon.

Of the two main industrial fuels for factory use, gas oil goes down 2p a gallon and fuel oil by 0.5p a gallon. Domestic central heating installations benefit from a 1p a gallon reduction in the price of kerosene.

The cuts are largely in line with the reductions already made by Shell.

Last year, compared with 1980, demand by industry for fuels declined between 18 and 25 per cent in various sectors. Petrol deliveries were down 2.2 per cent.

Under an agreement with



Assault on batteries group

Scientists on the march: a brief pause for some of 200 placard-carrying scientists and technicians from the Tottenham, London research centre of the Batteries group yesterday (now known as British Ever Ready) who marched on the Knightsbridge headquarters of its Hanson Trust parent group as part of their campaign to prevent the rundown of the company's activities. Hanson directors on the Berc board have agreed to discuss the issue with union leader, Mr Roger Lyons, on March 29.

By Our Financial Staff

NABISCO'S £84m BID REFERRED

Nabisco Brands, the United States food group, yesterday made its expected £84m counterbid for Huntley & Palmer and was promptly referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Earlier this week the Office of Fair Trading decided to refer Rowntree Mackintosh's £72.5m offer for Huntley. The OFT is believed to have recommended the reference on the grounds that the merger would give Nabisco 40 per cent of the British snacks market and that a failure to bring the offer would be disadvantageous to both bidders.

Both offers are effectively in limbo until the commission's report, which will take at least six months. But the Huntley board favours a merger with the American group.

Nabisco, advised by N. M. Rothschild, says it will offer 120p for each Huntley share with an alternative cash offer equivalent to 115p a share. Rowntree's bid is pitched at 105p a share.

Steady rise in loans to private sector

By John Whitmore

Bank lending to the private sector continued to grow strongly last month. Figures released by the Bank of England yesterday showed that such lending grew by a seasonally adjusted 1.976m. in the four weeks to February 17.

This brings the rise in lending to the private sector to just over £12.750m in the past 12 months. Over the last six months, lending has grown at an annual rate of more than £18,500m, or rather more than 30 per cent per annum.

The latest figures may, however, exaggerate the trend. The four weeks to mid-February saw considerable pressures on corporate liquidity, not only to meet normal tax payments but also an estimated £500m-£750m of tax still owing as a result of last summer's civil service dispute.

Against this rapid expansion in private sector credit, public sector transactions had a large contractionary impact on domestic credit.

Central government was in surplus to the tune of £416m; the rest of the public sector had a contradictory effect of £88m; and the non-bank private sector took up £1,188m. of public sector debt.

As already intimated by the Bank last week, sterling M3, the broad measure of banking money, was barely changed on the month. This reduced the rate of growth over the last year to 14 1/2 per cent.

British residents' holdings of foreign currency deposits in United Kingdom banks rose by £220m in the four weeks, the whole of the increase being attributable to valuation changes. (Cables, page 15, Business Editor, page 15.)

Treasury confirms no tax drop

By Melvyn Westlake

The Treasury yesterday confirmed the claims of Labour shadow ministers that the typical taxpayer on average earnings would see no reduction in his tax burden in the coming year, and in some cases would face an increase.

A married man with two children, on average earnings, will see 45.2 per cent of his pay go to meet income tax, national insurance contributions, indirect taxes like VAT and household rates.

This was disclosed by Mr Nicholas Ridley, Financial Secretary to the Treasury in the House, in reply to a question by Mr Jack Straw, Labour, Birkbeck.

The typical married man would have been paying 45 per cent of his earnings in taxes during the year just ending and 42.7 per cent in 1980-81.

Those earning less than average will, in many cases, see little change in their tax burden this year, but the higher paid will enjoy some reductions.

In doing its sums, the Treasury has assumed that earnings increase by about 7 1/2 per cent during the coming 12 months, to reach £160 a week on average.

A married man, with two children, receiving only three-quarters of average pay will pay 43.4 per cent in total taxes. This is almost exactly the same as paid in 1981-82.

A single person, on the same level of earnings will, however, be paying more. At the other end of the spectrum, a married man receiving ten times average earnings will see his personal tax burden drop from 52.4 to 52.1 per cent. This is not strictly comparable with those on average levels of pay because it excludes indirect taxes and household rates.

Treasury economists find it much more difficult to estimate how much the higher earners actually pay in excise duties, VAT and rates.

In the case of higher earners, only income tax and national insurance is taken into account. There was a good deal of confusion immediately after the Budget about whether the Chancellor had actually reduced the tax burden for most people.

It is now clear that if all taxes are taken together, there will not be a significant reduction for most people earning less than £240 a week in the coming year.

This equivalent to 150 per cent of average pay, which is probably as much as many skilled workers in industry can hope to get.

Tax evaders uncovered

Thirty-eight thousand taxpayers who received interest from bank deposit accounts or similar investments failed to declare this income to the Inland Revenue last year (Lower Bourne writes). In addition, 53,335 either deliberately or accidentally underpaid tax amounting to £116.6m.

More than 22,000 of these taxpayers were systematically falsifying their returns involving what the Revenue describes as "negligence, wilful default or fraud". When the Revenue caught up with them they paid not only the unpaid tax, but penalties and interest payments amounting to more than £32m.

These and many more facts about the British taxpayer emerge from the latest annual report of the Inland Revenue for the year ending 1981, March 31.

Sale Tilney

Results

(subject to final Audit)

Year to November	1981	1980	
	£000	£000	
Net Profit before Tax	1,977	1,936	+2.1%
Total shareholders' funds	11,405	10,001	+14.0%
Earnings per ordinary share	34.2p	30.8p	+11.0%
Net Assets per ordinary share	236.3p	206.8p	+14.2%

Dividend

Payment of a final dividend of 4.25p per share is being recommended on the ordinary share capital. With the interim dividend total payments are 8.0p per share (1980 7.5p per share).

Extract from the Chairman's Review

The world is still in the throes of an exceptionally severe recession. There is some relief in sight as oil prices begin to soften and as interest rates decline. Nevertheless, I do not foresee a general end to the worldwide recession until the end of 1983. It is against this background that I am happy to say that this year the Group should be able to record an increase in profits.

SALE TILNEY & COMPANY, p.l.c.
28 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AB

nace is £17,050

Room Correspondent
In the domestic market, a small but steady increase in demand for new homes was recorded in the first three months of the year. The number of new homes started in the first three months of the year was 13 per cent higher than in the same period last year. The number of new homes completed was 15 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold was 10 per cent higher. The number of new homes let was 12 per cent higher. The number of new homes built was 14 per cent higher. The number of new homes occupied was 16 per cent higher. The number of new homes demolished was 18 per cent higher. The number of new homes reconstructed was 20 per cent higher. The number of new homes converted was 22 per cent higher. The number of new homes extended was 24 per cent higher. The number of new homes altered was 26 per cent higher. The number of new homes repaired was 28 per cent higher. The number of new homes painted was 30 per cent higher. The number of new homes furnished was 32 per cent higher. The number of new homes decorated was 34 per cent higher. The number of new homes cleaned was 36 per cent higher. The number of new homes moved into was 38 per cent higher. The number of new homes moved out of was 40 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 42 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 44 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 46 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 48 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 50 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 52 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 54 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 56 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 58 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 60 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 62 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 64 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 66 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 68 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 70 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 72 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 74 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 76 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 78 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 80 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 82 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 84 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 86 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 88 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 90 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 92 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 94 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 96 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a profit was 98 per cent higher. The number of new homes sold for a loss was 100 per cent higher.

BUSINESS NEWS/FOCUS AND COMMENT

PEOPLE

More than a fleeting success

The Bibby Line, the oldest surviving independent British shipping company, is celebrating its 175th anniversary. At a civic reception in Liverpool last night, the chairman Derek Bibby, a great-grandson of the founder, presented the Lord Mayor with a specially-written history of the firm which has through six generations sent more than 170 ships from its Merseyside headquarters to sail the trade routes of the world.

The earliest sailing vessels, including several captured from the French during the



John Bibby, founder of the Bibby Line

Napoleonic wars, ferried pig iron, while the latest are diesel-powered super-tankers carrying liquid gas and oil. In between have been cargo and passenger ships of almost every kind, including the Somersetshire, a hospital ship torpedoed in 1942, re-boarded and saved by her crew. She continued in service until 1948.

Withdrawal from the passenger trade came in 1965, and lay-ups became necessary from 1977 as freight markets slackened. The past year has been one of consolidation. But, Mr Bibby says, the company "has sufficient resources to see itself through the coming difficult months or even years, and is already looking forward to celebrating its bicentenary."

Geoffrey McLean is waiting for the results of an unusual interview in which candidates for a job in his gift interviewed him and not the other way round.

McLean is the chairman of the Midlands Study Centre for the Building Team, a unit at Birmingham Poly which gives mid-career training to people in the building trade.

John Kirwan, the founder-director after three years is himself doing a career switch and returning to architecture. Since McLean and the centre have only £9,000 to offer in salary and office costs McLean thought it better to have candidates interview him and then to go away and decide whether or not they wanted the job.

Shaw, in a two-hour question and answer session, said McLean: "There are 12 people considering whether the job will get the applicants rather than the other way around."

Oil companies' pollution risk

Insurance persons of the world unite in London next month when Gordon Shaw is bringing together about 1,000 of them in the biggest insurance function yet to take place in the capital — the International Congress in Insurance Law.

Shaw, congress director and arbitrator in insurance disputes, says that the juicy part of the five-day congress which begins on April 19 is the meeting of the working group on pollution on insurance. This is headed by Ambrose Kelly, chairman of the Chicago-based Pollution Liability Insurance Association, which is funded by the American Bar Foundation.

Says Shaw unless world governments start listening to the working group and lay down the law on lead content in petrol, oil companies risk claims "far beyond the reach of ordinary policies."

Harrods goes east this autumn, when it opens a small shop within the Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo — the first time that its merchandise has been offered in a major overseas market.

The arrangement follows several years' cooperation between the two groups and will involve Harrods' own-label goods exclusively. Mr Alec Craddock, Harrods chairman and managing director, will visit Japan in May to complete plans. "This is a most exciting development," he says. "We are delighted to be associated with Mitsukoshi in this unique way."

Nicholas Cole

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Mr John R. Turrell III has been elected president of Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company. Mr Taylor and Mr Turrell, formerly vice-chairmen of the organisations, succeeded Mr John P. McGinnis who has been president of both.

Mr Paul C. Butler, Mr D. Noel Healy and Mr Peter V. Reed have been appointed assistant directors of merchant bankers, Charterhouse Japhet.

Mr John A. Bogardus Jr, Mr Richard E. Lynn and Mr Ian H. have joined the board of London Group.

Peter Wilson-Smith and Peter Hill

Stone-Platt collapse: the banks finally lose patience

The collapse of textile machinery and engineering company Stone-Platt has occasioned a furious row of a kind rarely seen in the City. Publicly those involved in the last ditch attempts to bring Stone-Platt back from the brink were expressing disappointment that the bank had not seen fit to go along with the latest rescue plan.

Privately the comments were much harsher. Indeed the City view is that the banks have let the side down badly.

"Frankly they ought to stick to lending money for houses. Industry would be better off going to the building societies for risk capital. I really do feel the banks would have acted differently six months ago."

Thus spoke one City man yesterday as the receivers moved in at Stone-Platt bringing to a dismal end a rescue story which began in April 1980 when the company first ran into default on its bank loans and its bankers — under the watchful eye of the Bank of England — rallied round to save the situation.

Nearly two years, two rescues and several million pounds later, however, the banks' patience has finally run out. Desperate last minute talks over the weekend involving the Bank of England in the person of Mr David Walker, head of its industrial finance unit, could not save the day.

Ironically the key to the latest efforts to save the company was the sale of the Lancashire-based Platt Saco Lowell textile machinery division, the running sore which is largely responsible for the company's problems.

It made trading losses of £2.97m in 1979 and £2.82m in 1980 because of the deep-seated problems in its Lancashire operations many of which arose from the appalling recession. More than any other sector of the British engineering industry, the textile machinery sector has suffered huge contraction and re-trenchment. In 1970 the industry employed 47,000 workers; nine years later it had shrunk to about 24,000 and is now under 20,000 with many of those spending much of their time on short time working.

Output has been falling in real terms steadily since 1975, and even more significantly British companies have seen their share of the home market being steadily eroded by imported machinery.

In 1980 (the latest year for which figures are available) the share of the domestic market held by British companies slumped to only 25 per cent — well short of the targets set by the industry itself.

For the 200 or so companies involved in manufacturing textile industry machinery, the bulk of them small and medium sized concerns, the principal pre-occupation

in recent years has been simple survival. Research and development budgets have been cut to the bone and even funds made available by the Government under the Industry Act designed to stimulate development work on new machines have been underused.

High British interest rates and an exchange rate which has made exporting difficult, have compounded the industry's problems in overseas markets. West German and Swiss-made machinery is dominant while Japan, France, Italy and the United States are all providing stiff competition.

The foreign companies have been able to compete much more effectively in countries outside the EEC because of the greater strength of their domestic markets. Five years ago the British textile machinery companies were exporting on average about half of their production but last year the proportion dropped below 40 per cent.

HOW PROFITS SLUMPED

Pre-tax profits (£m)	
1971	3.38
1972	4.65
1973	7.04
1974	7.89
1975	11.14
1976	15.81
1977	14.43
1978	9.51
1979	-2.94
1980	-5.54

A detailed analysis of the industry published last year by ICC Business Ratios noted that by the middle of 1980, the average return on investment for machinery builders was a mere 3.7 per cent with one in three of the industry's companies operating at a loss.

This was the background against which Stone-Platt had to battle for survival. Faced with the crippling cash drain of the Lancashire textile machinery operations, Stone-Platt embarked on a programme of redundancy and re-trenchment accompanied by a series of major asset sales to cut borrowings. New management was also brought in. Mr Leslie Coz, a man with a high reputation from his days in the oil industry and at the Price Commission, came in to rejuvenate the group.

In November 1980 the group sold off its pump division for £2.5m in a move which together with other smaller sales cut into borrowings by £14m. Early in 1981 there were further asset sales as the propeller business was disposed of. At the same time progress continued on reducing numbers employed in the main United Kingdom textile machinery operations in Lancashire.

The results for 1980, however, showed a net loss after provisions and disposal costs of £15m. Meanwhile borrow-

ings remained high at £32m net compared with £40m of shareholders' funds.

So in March 1981 the City rallied round again with a £10m capital injection and new borrowing facilities totalling £40m. Finance Corporation for Industry, the medium term lending institution backed by the clearing banks and the Bank of England, and Equity Capital for Industry — owned by City institutions — stumped up between them £3m of the new capital while big shareholders like Prudential Assurance and M & G also increased their exposure to the group.

At the time Stone-Platt said that it could not make a forecast but hoped to break even in 1981. In the event this was proved far too optimistic.

Losses were up again in the first half of 1981 from £2.5m to £3.5m pre-tax, dashing any hope of a break-even for 1981 as a whole and a further indication that all was not well came last October when Mr Robin Taverner, resigned suddenly from his post as chief executive.

The failure of the latest rescue attempt, which appears to have been necessitated by the greater-than-expected difficulties in turning round the Lancashire operations, together with a downturn in the State textile machinery side, is open to different interpretations.

The view of ECI, FCI and the institutional shareholders was that if the sale of the Platt Saco Lowell textile machinery division, the main source of the group's problems, could have been successfully carried out, that together with the property sales, it would have left the basis for a viable company.

Together these sales would have raised perhaps £15m and although there would have been a big write-down in the value of the group, the problems could have been successfully carried out, that together with the property sales, it would have left the basis for a viable company.

However the assets being sold were security for the banks' loans and in order to carry on trading Stone-Platt would need to keep some of the cash it was raising. The banks, headed by Midland Bank, were not prepared to see their security whittled away and their risk increased. If the assets against which they had secured their loans were sold, the banks wanted the money back.

This view appears to have been unanimous among the main lending banks, Midland, National Westminster, Barclays and its merchant bank subsidiary, and Williams & Glyn's.

It is likely that they have all made provisions already against their loans to Stone-Platt and it is thought that



Mr Leslie Pincoff Stone-Platt chairman yesterday: a distinguished career, but he was unable to arrest the decline

between them they now stand to lose £12m to £16m.

However the alternative as the banks appear to have seen it, was to increase their exposure to a company which even after the disposals would need at least £10m to £15m of new capital, and could at best project a break-even for 1982.

At the end of the day their losses might have been even greater. So faced with the refusal of the banks to raise money quickly from elsewhere, Stone-Platt was left with no alternative but to ask for a receiver to be appointed.

The surprising element in the collapse of Stone-Platt is that the banks and institutions have disagreed so strongly on both its prospects and needs, if this latest rescue plan went through, Stone-Platt itself believed that only £5m to £7m extra capital would have been required if the short term problems could be overcome — a view supported by the institutions involved but a far cry from the £10m to £15m the banks thought necessary.

According to one of those involved in the rescue, the banks "think the banks lost confidence when Stone-Platt did not meet its projections for 1981. But I don't think they ever really understood the very real difficulties for a company of this kind trying to forecast its likely sales and profits."

During the recession the banks have constantly emphasized how they bent over backwards to help borrowers who ran into difficulties and besides Stone-Platt there have been a number of other well-publicized rescue packages involving banks and City institutions. Weir Group, computer company ICL have all been indulged by their bankers. But the Stone-Platt failure has raised new fears.

"What I hope it does not mean is that there is some sea change in the banks' attitude towards supporting industry," said one concerned fund manager yesterday.

Should the government have intervened? The Department of Industry has been in regular contact with the company and the sector of the engineering industry — over the past twelve months. It was aware of the deepening crisis. But any rescue operation by Whitehall was firmly ruled out by the Government's belief that the receivership/manager route is to be preferred.

Although Stone-Platt is a significant force in the British textile machinery sector (indeed, perhaps the most significant) Whitehall is confident that the textile industry will continue to be able to obtain supplies of machinery, though the volume of imports may rise.

Business Editor

Europeans cut interest rate

Down came German, Swiss and Dutch interest rates yesterday, and almost simultaneously. On the face of it, one could hardly have had more conclusive evidence of a concerted move by leading European countries to break the stranglehold of United States influence. Yet that may be an over-simplification.

The prime decision-makers in this instance were clearly the Germans. But the Germans may have been considering several things in choosing to act.

Obviously, they are keen to get interest rates steadily lower for domestic considerations; and the recent stability of the currency vis-à-vis the dollar, in the DM 2.35 to DM 2.40 range, is presumably seen as offering the right kind of exchange rate background.

But the Germans must also be acutely aware of the mounting pressure on the French and Belgian francs within the European Monetary System. Not only must there be considerable reluctance to have a fresh devaluation within the EMS so soon after the last on February 22, but the Germans may be none too keen on the idea of a French devaluation in any case.

For the moment, then, lower German and Dutch interest rates, combined with rather higher French interest rates, may help to stabilise the situation. And doubtless the Germans will use the breathing space to quietly suggest, to the French, that they consider their domestic policies.

Markets are not betting on this being any more than a breathing space, however. They see nothing to encourage them when they look at France: persisting high inflation, a large trade deficit, and a swelling budget deficit predicated — shades of the United States — on over-optimistic growth assumptions. The feeling is growing that the spring, with bring franc devaluation, perhaps 8 per cent, with the Belgian currency almost inevitably going with it.

Meanwhile, United Kingdom money markets appear slightly more relaxed than earlier in the week, though the overall structure of rates coming up for any major reconsideration for some weeks yet. Yesterday's full banking figures for February confirmed that bank lending to the private sector had once again grown strongly, albeit that large back-tax payments will have played their part in swelling the increase to £1,976m.

The Bank of England Issue Department, incidentally, provided a further £50m of this lending as its portfolio of eligible bills continued to grow. That figure will have expanded still further since, and the figure for outstanding sale and repurchase agreements will have added to more than £1,900m.

GKN

A firm base

The recession has impinged on GKN as much as anyone, forcing the company into a number of harsh decisions. Although there is further rationalization to come, the group does at least seem to be more on top of its problems than a number of other large industrial groups.

Certainly, second-half profits last year were appreciably better than the first half had anticipated, with trading profits (before redundancy and rationalization costs) pushing up from £34.1m in the opening six months to £50.1m. That left a full-year pre-tax profit of £34.6m against a pre-tax loss of £1.2m in 1980.

The weighting of taxable profits, in the overseas operations, has left the overall after-tax position at little better than break-even.

For the present year GKN sees little improvement for the first six months. In Britain the group is resting on its cost-cutting achievements.

Others believe that chip-assembly genes will eventually be inserted in human cells and make hundreds of microelectronic copies of an organic computer inside our bodies. The biochips will be able to correct failures in the nervous system that are brought on by disease or aging. When that day comes — in the next century — we really will have intelligence at our fingertips.

However, a number of small American firms are working more openly on organic circuits. The Maryland town of Rockville, which is a centre of biotechnology research, seems to be the focus of activity. One Rockville company, EMV Associates, has patented a simple two-dimensional biochip based on layers of protein one molecule thick.

The National Science Foundation (the government agency responsible for basic research in the United States) recently gave EMV a grant to develop a biochip that could be connected directly to the central nervous system. It will have up to 100,000 electrodes on which embryonic nerve cells can be cultured.

In theory an array of these molecules could store vast quantities of information in binary code like a conventional memory chip. But it would be millions of times more compact, because each molecule takes up far less space than a transistor on the

called — Langmuir-Blodgett film — an insulating layer of organic molecules whose properties can be precisely controlled — and embed enzyme in it. Then, when the chemical you want to measure, say penicillin, binds to the enzyme, the latter changes shape and causes a transient electrical disturbance which the chip detects.

An alternative is to include whole bacteria. Instead of enzymes, in the surface

layer. These have the advantage of responding to a wider variety of chemicals, if you want a more general sensor. For example bacteria of the type found on sewage farms, which metabolize human waste, would be good candidates for incorporation in a biochip to measure river pollution near sewer outfalls.

The second type of biochip, made out of organic compounds rather than inorganic semiconductor, is under investigation in several American laboratories. Scientists have discovered organic molecules which can exist in two distinct states and which can be switched between them by applying a tiny electric charge. (In chemical terms, the effect depends in the switching of hydrogen bonds.)

In theory an array of these molecules could store vast quantities of information in binary code like a conventional memory chip. But it would be millions of times more compact, because each molecule takes up far less space than a transistor on the

ments until volume picks up significantly, while it is obviously going to be a very difficult half year for the American operation.

With the prospect of some pick-up in world economic activity in the second half, however, GKN could start to edge forward faster.

Meanwhile, year-end borrowings were slightly down and though GKN might still be a rights issue candidate later this year, it remains to be seen what cash the group will raise through further divestments. With the shares up 3p to 162p, the capitalization is £268m and the yield 7.1 per cent.

The Economy Where next?

The composite index of economic indicators, published yesterday, will go some way to restoring the Government's confidence in a recovery, following the depressed level of industrial production.

The "longer leading" index, which predicts the ups and downs of the economy about 12 months ahead, has been rising steadily since the autumn and showed a particularly marked rise last month.

However, the reading given by this index is not as unambiguously bullish as it might at first appear. The rise in February was based on only two of the five component indicators — interest rates were coming down and share prices were going up. Secondly, the index has been wobbling about since last spring when, after an earlier surge, it suddenly began to slide. It then continued to decline during the summer and early autumn.

If this is an accurate guide to the future trend of the economy we are likely to see an unrelenting break in the recovery before it resumes its momentum. On the other hand, experience suggests that a series of wobbles on the index could be the prelude to a sharp change in direction.

In this case, the recovery can be expected to be weak and short-lived. This would certainly square with some other evidence.

The separate "coincident" index which is supposed to show the stage of the business cycle reached at present, has remained flat since the end of last summer. This is probably consistent with what has been happening to industrial production. It was, of course, atrocious weather and strikes which helped depress industrial output recently, according to the Government. Unfortunately these are not factors that the longer leading index is able to predict.

Stone-Platt Lessons

The row which has broken out between institutional investors and the banks about the decision to pull the rug from under Stone-Platt is unprecedented.

Inevitably, criticism may or may not be justified. It is difficult for those not privy to the facts to make a judgement. It is as well to remember, of course, that the institutional shareholders have plenty of reasons to scream: they, as well as the banks, have a lot to lose.

Are there any immediate lessons to be drawn? One might be that the general recession has moved to a stage where there is less desire to bend over backwards to keep companies afloat. At the same time, however, it has probably become clearer that for certain industries long-term prospects now look no better than they did a year or so ago.

Finally, one comes back to the question of whether banks and other institutions can be expected to give long enough cash flow relief to ailing companies without the government sharing at least part of the risk.

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The Over-the-Counter Market

1981/82	High	Low	Company	Price	Chg	Div	Yld	P/E	Ratio
128	100	98	Asa Brit Ind CULS	128	+2	10.0	7.8	—	—
75	62	61	Airsprung Group	73	—	4.7	6.4	11.6	16.0
51	33	32	Airmaths & Rhodes	45	—	4.3	9.5	3.8	8.5
205	187	186	Bardon Hill	198	+1	9.7	4.9	9.6	11.7
107	100	99	CCL 11% Conv Pref	107	—	15.7	14.7	—	—
104	63	62	Deborah Services	63	—	6.0	9.5	3.1	5.9
131	97	96	Frank Horsell	127	—	6.4	5.0	11.4	23.5
83	39	38	Frederick Parker	81	+1	6.4	7.9	4.1	7.9
78	46	45	George Blair	53	—	—	—	—	—
102	93	92	Ind Prec Castings	95	—	7.3	7.7	6.8	10.3
109	100	99	Isis Conv Pref	109	—	15.7	14.4	—	—
113	94	93	Jackson Group	97	—	7.0	7.2	3.1	6.9
130	108	107	James Burrough	113	—	8.7	7.7	8.2	10.4
334	248	247	Robert Jenkins	248	—	31.3	12.6	3.4	8.8
63	51	50	Serutons "A"	63	—	5.3	8.4	9.7	9.0
222	159	158	Torday & Cariale	159	—	10.7	6.7	5.1	9.5
15	10	9	Twinklork Ord	13	—	—	—	—	—
80	66	65	Twinklork 15% ULS	79	—	15.0	19.0	—	—
44	25	24	Unilever Holdings	25	—	3.0	12.0	4.5	7.6
103	73	72	Walter Alexander	79	+1	6.4	8.1	5.2	9.2
263	212	211	W. S. Yates	228	+2	13.1	5.7	4.3	8.8

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Tony Weaver



The Queen chatting with pensioners yesterday when she opened a centre in Finsbury, London, which will provide them with meals and entertainment.

Alliance seats share-out 'on target'

By Philip Webster, Political Reporter

The Liberals and Social Democrats announced yesterday an almost equal division between the parties of two-thirds of Britain's parliamentary seats to be fought at the next general election and voiced confidence that agreement in the majority of the remainder would be achieved by the end of the month.

The announcement of significant progress in the talks, hailed as a "remarkable achievement" in a joint statement by Mr David Steel and Mr William Rodgers, was obviously timed to give a boost to the alliance in the run-up to the crucial by-election next week at Glasgow, Hillhead. But the level of agreement reached has far exceeded the expecta-

tions of leading figures in both parties. The parties announced that final deals had been struck in 19 of the 48 negotiating units, and provisional agreements in a further 16 which await the approval of the local parties. Of the 398 seats in these 35 units the Liberals are to fight 202 seats and the SDP 196.

Thus the objective which has guided the parties throughout the discussions—that of achieving rough parity in the total number each fights at the next general election—has been carried out to the letter. Fears being expressed just after Christmas, when Mr Rodgers broke off negotiations, that intransigence on both sides could ruin the alliance's prospects, have largely not been borne out, although both parties readily admit that across

the country there are many local disputes still to be sorted out. Mr Steel and Mr Rodgers said the progress made "reflects greatly to the credit of all our local members who have been involved in negotiations and have been obliged to make concessions and, sometimes, accept difficult decisions".

The areas where full agreements have been made include Scotland, Wales, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and parts of Greater London, and those where provisional deals have been completed include other parts of Greater London, part of Greater Manchester, East and West Sussex, Essex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, North Yorkshire

and Humberside, Somerset, Dorset, South Yorkshire, Surrey, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. Many local deals have been completed in recent days, when the state of progress was last announced about three weeks ago fewer than 200 seats had been settled.

The 13 negotiating units where talks are still going on are central London, North-east London, Greater Manchester South, Lancashire and Cumbria, Merseyside, Shropshire, Hereford, Worcester and Staffordshire, West Yorkshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, Cheshire, Cleveland and Durham, Devon and Cornwall and Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Avon.

Lord Shinwell resigns Whip

Lord Shinwell, who will be 98 in October, has resigned the Labour whip in the House of Lords.

Lord Shinwell, who will be 98 in October, has resigned the Labour whip in the House of Lords. In a letter to Lord Trevelyan, leader of the Labour peers, the former Secretary of State for War and Minister of Defence said although he had no intention of leaving the party, he would in future regard himself as an independent. Lord Shinwell is understood to be upset about his treatment in the Lords on March 11 after Lord Trevelyan, Minister of State for Defence Procurement, announced the decision to go ahead with the Trident missile system.

After more than half an hour of questions Lady Young, Leader of the Lords, suggested a close, but when Lord Shinwell began to ask a question he was interrupted by Lord Llewellyn-Davies, the Labour chief whip, who agreed with Lady Young.

Benn calls for vote on Lords' abolition

Continued from page 1

It did to Asquith in 1910, that there should be another general election to confirm that there was public approval. Far better, Mr Benn says, to get the approval of the electorate for the "swamping" proposal before the party comes into office.

It should be stated in the manifesto that the party, if voted into power, would ask the Queen to create an unspecified number of peers to carry through the Lords Abolition Bill. That, he tells his critics, would be "straightforward and honest" and would dispose of any claim that the electors did not know what they were doing.

Once "swamping" was accepted, the question was how to do it. In recent times, peerages have usually been created on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of the day. That procedure would not be satisfactory on an issue of such profound constitutional importance, Mr Benn states. It must be seen that it is the will of the people that the Queen should act as requested.

He has found, he says, two precedents for asking the Queen to act at the behest of a parliament. One of them he highlighted when he was preparing his case before the High Court in the action which preceded renunciation of the Stansgate peerage. It was a request from Canada, which should not create any more peerages in Canada. That was done direct, by humble address.

Another precedent, he says, is provided by instances where the Commons, by humble address, asks the Queen to convoke a peerage on a retired Speaker as a "signal mark of royal favour". So, Mr Benn emphasises, there is a mechanism by which the Commons can ask the Crown to act and it is a proper, constitutional procedure.

Although the paper is said to be written in "high faluting" constitutional language, it comes down to brass tacks when it makes the essential point that the House of Lords is a creation of the Crown prerogative, and it can only be "swamped" by the Crown prerogative.

Frank Johnson in the Commons

Big Jim's amazing last gamble pays off

James Callaghan, a 69-year-old retired Inland Revenue officer of Cardiff South-East, was yesterday questioned by Mrs Margaret Thatcher about a series of murders in the late 1970s when he was allegedly Britain's "Mr Big".

He succeeded the notorious Sir Harold Wilson, who was Britain's "Mr Little".

Looking directly across at Mr Callaghan during exchanges on the law and order issue, Mrs Thatcher told the House: "Murders were greatest during the life of the last government." Mr Callaghan pleaded not guilty to all charges. Reporting restrictions were lifted. The entire Labour Party offered to act as character witnesses on his behalf, which was more than could be said when he was Prime Minister.

Giving evidence, Mr Callaghan said that "serious crimes, offences recorded by the police, of violence against the person, burglary, robbery, handling of stolen goods and criminal damage declined each year when I was Prime Minister."

So Big Jim, this man who terrorized a nation, had decided to deny it all. It was his last amazing gamble. He'll never get away with it, we all told one another. He's innocent, it's a frame-up, OK? "A woman shouted from the public gallery. (Well, all right then, perhaps it was Mr Dennis Skinner. Or perhaps I imagined it.) The Speaker said that if there was a repetition of such behaviour he would clear the court. Furthermore, this was not a court of morals. (Or at least, if the Speaker said nothing of the sort, he should have said it.)

There was then a sensational development in the case. In a complete reversal, Mr Callaghan said that serious crimes not only "declined" each year when I was Prime Minister, but "have gone up each year since". And he waved the Home Office document containing the statistics that would prove his innocence.

So it was Mrs Thatcher who

had presided over the most murders. This ending was contrary to the most fundamental principle of crime fiction. This is the rule that the police officer must never be the character who turns out to have done it. Otherwise it is just cheating. Yet here we had an ending in which the detective-figure, Mrs Thatcher, was the one responsible for the most murders.

Any of us could write crime fiction on that basis. It is simply a matter of making the least plausible or most respectable character into the villain. It was all as wretched as *The Mousetrap* in which, you will recall, the murderer is the one who everyone believes is the policeman. The Speaker, who I assume writes the scripts of all these question times, was simply not trying yesterday, brilliant though he usually is.

Mrs Thatcher, still seared and rummaging among her notes, made as if she was going to deny the terrible evidence that Mr Callaghan held in his hand. But as he sat down, he remarked: "Despite what the Right hon Lady said in her election speeches, neither she nor I has any influence at all on those statistics."

Mrs Thatcher arose amid colossal Labour derision. She hesitated and once more pillaged her notes. Suddenly, she opted for candour. The situation was that desperate. "I am grateful to the Right hon Gentleman for the last comment which is obviously correct. I cannot reinforce what I said about the number of murders, I was thinking about something else. I will therefore give the House the relevant statistics of which I was thinking, which I had in my mind, although it was not all about murders..." Last night the entire Home Office was helping the Prime Minister with her inquiries.

THE TIMES INFORMATION SERVICE

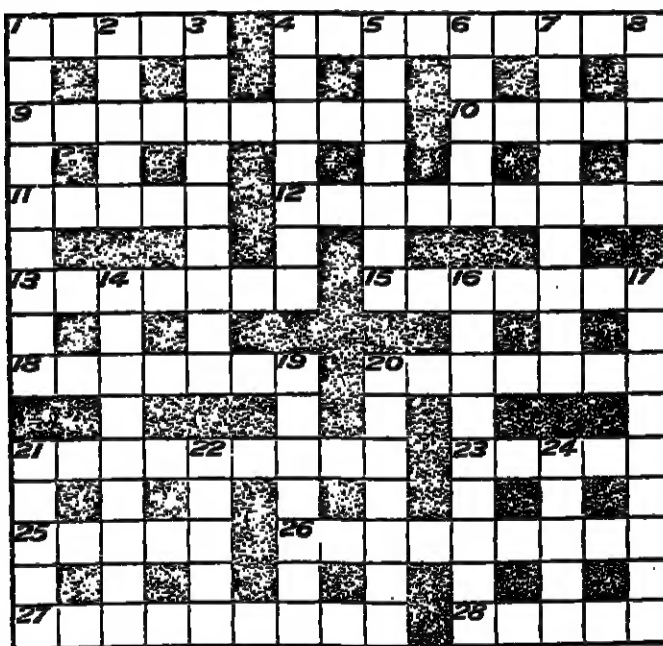
Today's events

Royal engagements
The Queen visits Staff College, Camberley, 11.30.
Princess Margaret, Grand President of St John Ambulance Association and Brigade, opens new Leyton and Leytonstone Headquarters of Leyton District, 4.

Exhibitions in progress

Work by Carl Weight, York City Museum, Exhibition Square, York: Mon to Sat 10 to 5, Sun 2.30 to 5 (until April 11)—guided tour by the artist today at 3.30 and 6 (for reservations call 0904 23839).
Paintings and sculpture by Bert Roberts, Manor House, Headingley, Leeds: Mon to Sat 10 to 5 (until April 4).

The Times Crossword Puzzle No 15,784



- ACROSS**
- 1 Look into TUC backing strike (5).
 - 2 Annabel Lee entombed "In the—there by the sea" (9).
 - 3 Joker drawing support (3-6).
 - 4 Harassed numbers round the river (5).
 - 5 Many on leave in Africa (5).
 - 6 Trader appears to call £500 stupid for return (9).
 - 7 Drains showing evidence of past revelry (7).
 - 8 Pungent being of high standing (7).
 - 9 Islander reporting chess capture (7).
 - 10 Is involved with various rates for literary works (7).
 - 11 Yard supporter gets spliced—rum business (9).
 - 12 Rascal among hydro guests (7).
 - 13 Great fear of being late? That's about right (5).
 - 14 Momentous meaning attached to a Bible section (9).
 - 15 Rider for cars Porsche forthcoming (9).
 - 16 He sings a note, say (5).
- DOWN**
- 1 Minor complaint over best part of feature film (4,5).
 - 2 A heart perhaps is playable (5).
 - 3 German expression shown one—it must get translated (9).
 - 4 Sausage Pole found in Greek island (7).
 - 5 Cuts made about publicity for show (7).
 - 6 Flat—with lift also (5).
 - 7 Little test in three sorts of verse (9).
 - 8 Direction for scoring bumps in French river? (3-2).
 - 9 Poor writer on river steamer (9).
 - 10 Explain meaning of terrible tripe about rent reform (9).
 - 11 Rebellious serviceman? (7).
 - 12 Approaching centre of Tenby (9).
 - 13 BR connection looked by late traveller? (7).
 - 14 Married lady so addressed two mothers? (5).
 - 15 Emblem gives us endless worry (5).
 - 16 Last trace of Cheshire Cat, swallowing a cereal (5).

Solution of Puzzle No 15,783

ACROSS
1. Sausage Pole
2. Heart
3. German
4. Rascal
5. Africa
6. Trader
7. Drains
8. Pungent
9. Islander
10. Involved
11. Yard
12. Rascal
13. Great
14. Momentous
15. Rider
16. He
DOWN
1. Minor
2. A
3. German
4. Sausage
5. Cuts
6. Flat
7. Little
8. Direction
9. Poor
10. Explain
11. Rebellious
12. Approaching
13. BR
14. Married
15. Emblem
16. Last

Late paintings by Sickert

Sickert, Centre for Visual Arts, University of E Anglia, Norwich: Tues to Sun 12 to 5 (until April 4).
Early Soviet Photographers, and 20 Years of Work by Mayakovsky, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford: Tues to Sat 10 to 5, Sun 2 to 5 (until May 2).
Olds and watercolours by Ian Houston, Maudslayi's Gallery, Elm Hill, Norwich: Mon to Sat 9 to 5.30 (until March 27).
History of Wine Collection by Harveys of Bristol, Castle Museum, Nottingham: Mon to Sun 10 to 4.45 (until May 3).
Cotswold Lions and Topiary Tapestries—paintings by Mary Sumner, Banbury Museum, 8 Horsefair, Banbury: Mon to Sat 10 to 4, closed Tues (until April 3).
Spirit of the Sea, paintings from late 17th century to the 20th century and models of ships, Oldham Art Gallery, Union Street, Oldham: Mon, Wed, Thurs and Fri 10 to 5, Tues to Sat 10 to 5, Sat 10 to 4 (until April 17).
Last chance to see
Recent work by Laura Holliday, Martyn Jones, Julie Mortimore and Philip Rawsthorne, Central Hall, University College, Cardiff: 9 am to 10 pm (ends today).
The Village Green—research by Paul Oliver on development and environment of the English village green, City of Birmingham Polytechnic: 10 to 4 (ends today).

Top 10 films

- The top ten films in London:
- 1 Reds
 - 2 Mad Max 2
 - 3 On Golden Pond
 - 4 Absence of Malice
 - 5 Chariots of Fire/Gregory's Girl
 - 6 Whose Life Is It Anyway?
 - 7 Arthur
 - 8 Death Wish II
 - 9 The French Lieutenant's Woman
 - 10 Dragonslayer
- The top five in the provinces:
- 1 Private Lessons
 - 2 Death Wish II
 - 3 Mad Max 2
 - 4 Monty Python's Life of Brian/Airplane!
 - 5 Kentucky Fried Movie

Compiled by Screen International

Food prices

Fruit will become scarcer and more expensive in coming weeks, the British Farm Produce Council warns. The last of the English Coxes now cost up to 50p a lb, and imports at up to 45p make little appeal. Citrus fruits and bananas are probably a more attractive proposition.

However, a plentiful crop of early home grown salad vegetables is expected. English lettuce is already a good buy, but for the moment imported tomatoes at between 30p and 40p a lb are much cheaper than English or produce.

Meat prices are mostly unchanged, but New Zealand lamb is on special offer in many shops, with leg as cheap as £1.30 a lb and shoulder under 80p.

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Auction viewings today

Bonhams, Montpelier Street: Oriental ceramics and works of art, 9 to 11; silver and plate, 9 to 4. Christie's, King Street: Russian sets, objects of vertu, Chinese works of art and miniatures, 9 to 11; English and Continental watercolours and drawings, 9 to 11. Sotheby's, Strand: Old and modern silver, 9 to 11; English and Continental watercolours and drawings, 9 to 11. Sotheby's, Strand: Old and modern silver, 9 to 11; English and Continental watercolours and drawings, 9 to 11. Sotheby's, Strand: Old and modern silver, 9 to 11; English and Continental watercolours and drawings, 9 to 11.

Top 10 films

- The top ten films in London:
- 1 Reds
 - 2 Mad Max 2
 - 3 On Golden Pond
 - 4 Absence of Malice
 - 5 Chariots of Fire/Gregory's Girl
 - 6 Whose Life Is It Anyway?
 - 7 Arthur
 - 8 Death Wish II
 - 9 The French Lieutenant's Woman
 - 10 Dragonslayer
- The top five in the provinces:
- 1 Private Lessons
 - 2 Death Wish II
 - 3 Mad Max 2
 - 4 Monty Python's Life of Brian/Airplane!
 - 5 Kentucky Fried Movie

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The papers

The criminal injuries board recommended £2,250 for a rape victim and £5,500 for a woman left with a facial scar. A man's sexual view of the world, says the Daily Mirror: "No doubt a woman scorned is thought to be three times as unattractive as a woman raped". It says the Commons yesterday on the British law order debate. Le Monde said: "The British police force, which used to be cited as exemplary in all democratic countries, is now criticised for contradictory reasons: too rough methods by some, weakness by others."

Roads

London and South-east: Woolwich Ferry: only one boat across yesterday on the London River. Earls Court area congested due to Ideal Home Exhibition. A14: Temporary signals at junction 15, near Bishop's Cleeve, at junction with Thorley Hill. Midlands: A5: Temporary signals at junction 15, near Bishop's Cleeve, at junction with Thorley Hill. A5: Temporary signals at junction 15, near Bishop's Cleeve, at junction with Thorley Hill. A5: Temporary signals at junction 15, near Bishop's Cleeve, at junction with Thorley Hill. A5: Temporary signals at junction 15, near Bishop's Cleeve, at junction with Thorley Hill.

Sea

Sealink, Holyhead/Dun Laoghaire services suspended.

The Pound

	Rank	Rank
Australia \$	1.77	1.79
Austria Sch	31.65	29.65
Belgium F	91.50	87.00
Canada \$	2.27	2.18
Denmark Kr	15.12	14.32
Finland Mk	8.61	8.16
France F	31.55	30.95
Germany DM	4.47	4.32
Greece Dr	115.00	108.00
Hong Kong \$	10.85	10.25
Ireland Pt	3380.00	2280.00
Italy Lir	462.00	436.00
Netherlands Gld	4.91	4.65
Norway Kr	11.35	10.75
Portugal Esc	131.00	124.00
Spain Ptas	192.50	183.50
Sweden S	13.2	12.4
Switzerland Fr	3.57	3.35
USA \$	1.86	1.79
Turkey Lira	97.00	91.00

Rates for small denomination bank notes only, as reported yesterday by Barclays Bank International.

London: The FT Index rose 5.4 to 356.8.

Weather

A frontal depression off SW England will move SE leaving most parts in a cold NE airstream.

6 am to midnight

London, SE England, E Angles: Bright intervals, light drizzle, mostly dry, with occasional rain later; wind S, backing NE; moderate or light; max temp 7 or 8C (45 or 46F).
Central S, SW England, Midlands, Wales, Channel Islands: Rather cloudy, occasional rain with drizzle or snow on high ground; becoming clearer from NW later; wind S, moderate or fresh, backing NE; light; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
E Angles: Some bright or sunny intervals, mostly dry at first, occasional showers later; wind variable, light, backing NE; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
NW, Central N England, Lake District, Isle of Man: Some bright or sunny intervals, mostly dry at first, occasional showers later; wind variable, light, backing NE; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
SE Angles: Some bright or sunny intervals, mostly dry at first, occasional showers later; wind variable, light, backing NE; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
Central S, SW England, Midlands, Wales, Channel Islands: Rather cloudy, occasional rain with drizzle or snow on high ground; becoming clearer from NW later; wind S, moderate or fresh, backing NE; light; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
E Angles: Some bright or sunny intervals, mostly dry at first, occasional showers later; wind variable, light, backing NE; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
NW, Central N England, Lake District, Isle of Man: Some bright or sunny intervals, mostly dry at first, occasional showers later; wind variable, light, backing NE; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).
SE Angles: Some bright or sunny intervals, mostly dry at first, occasional showers later; wind variable, light, backing NE; max temp 6 or 7C (43 or 45F).

Lighting up time

London 6.41 pm to 5.34 am
Bristol 6.51 pm to 5.44 am
Edinburgh 6.54 pm to 5.46 am
Manchester 6.50 pm to 5.45 am
Penzance 7.03 pm to 5.55 am

Yesterday

Temperatures at midday yesterday: c, cloudy; i, fair; m, mist; s, sun.
Belfast 10.4
Birmingham 10.4
Blackpool 10.4
Bristol 10.4
Cardiff 10.4
Edinburgh 10.4
Glasgow 10.4
Liverpool 10.4
Manchester 10.4
Newcastle 10.4
Penzance 10.4
Plymouth 10.4
Reading 10.4
Sheffield 10.4
Southampton 10.4
Telford 10.4
Tottenham 10.4
Wolverhampton 10.4
Wrexham 10.4

Satellite predictions

Figures give time of visibility, where rising, maximum elevation, and direction of setting. Asterisk denotes entering or leaving cloud cover.
MARCHESTER: Clouds 150h: 20.0-20.5; W: 55W; ENE: 21.30-21.40; WNW: 21.40-21.50; ENE: 21.50-22.00; WNW: 22.00-22.10; ENE: 22.10-22.20; WNW: 22.20-22.30; ENE: 22.30-22.40; WNW: 22.40-22.50; ENE: 22.50-23.00; WNW: 23.00-23.10; ENE: 23.10-23.20; WNW: 23.20-23.30; ENE: 23.30-23.40; WNW: 23.40-23.50; ENE: 23.50-24.00; WNW: 24.00-24.10; ENE: 24.10-24.20; WNW: 24.20-24.30; ENE: 24.30-24.40; WNW: 24.40-24.50; ENE: 24.50-25.00; WNW: 25.00-25.10; ENE: 25.10-25.20; WNW: 25.20-25.30; ENE: 25.30-25.40; WNW: 25.40-25.50; ENE: 25.50-26.00; WNW: 26.00-26.10; ENE: 26.10-26.20; WNW: 26.20-26.30; ENE: 26.30-26.40; WNW: 26.40-26.50; ENE: 26.50-27.00; WNW: 27.00-27.10; ENE: 27.10-27.20; WNW: 27.20-27.30; ENE: 27.30-27.40; WNW: 27.40-27.50; ENE: 27.50-28.00; WNW: 28.00-28.10; ENE: 28.10-28.20; WNW: 28.20-28.30; ENE: 28.30-28.40; WNW: 28.40-28.50; ENE: 28.50-29.00; WNW: 29.00-29.10; ENE: 29.10-29.20; WNW: 29.20-29.30; ENE: 29.30-29.40; WNW: 29.40-29.50; ENE: 29.50-30.00; WNW: 30.00-30.10; ENE: 30.10-30.20; WNW: 30.20-30.30; ENE: 30.30-30.40; WNW: 30.40-30.50; ENE: 30.50-31.00; WNW: 31.00-31.10; ENE: 31.10-31.20; WNW: 31.20-31.30; ENE: 31.30-31.40; WNW: 31.40-31.50; ENE: 31.50-32.00; WNW: 32.00-32.10; ENE: 32.10-32.20; WNW: 32.20-32.30; ENE: 32.30-32.40; WNW: 32.40-32.50; ENE: 32.50-33.00; WNW: 33.00-33.10; ENE: 33.10-33.20; WNW: 33.20-33.30; ENE: 33.30-33.40; WNW: 33.40-33.50; ENE: 33.50-34.00; WNW: 34.00-34.10; ENE: 34.10-34.20; WNW: 34.20-34.30; ENE: 34.30-34.40; WNW: 34.40-34.50; ENE: 34.50-35.00; WNW: 35.00-35.10; ENE: 35.10-35.20; WNW: 35.20-35.30; ENE: 35.30-35.40; WNW: 35.40-35.50; ENE: 35.50-36.00; WNW: 36.00-36.10; ENE: 36.10-36.20; WNW: 36.20-36.30; ENE: 36.30-36.40; WNW: 36.40-36.50; ENE: 36.50-37.00; WNW: 37.00-37.10; ENE: 37.10-37.20; WNW: 37.20-37.30; ENE: 37.30-37.40; WNW: 37.40-37.50; ENE: 37.50-38.00; WNW: 38.00-38.10; ENE: 38.10-38.20; WNW: 38.20-38.30; ENE: 38.30-38.40; WNW: 38.40-38.50; ENE: 38.50-39.00; WNW: 39.00-39.10; ENE: 39.10-39.20; WNW: 39.20-39.30; ENE: 39.30-39.40; WNW: 39.40-39.50; ENE: 39.50-40.00; WNW: 40.00-40.10; ENE: 40.10-40.20; WNW: 40.20-40.30; ENE: 40.30-40.40; WNW: 40.40-40.50; ENE: 40.50-41.00; WNW: 41.00-41.10; ENE: 41.10-41.20; WNW: 41.20-41.30; ENE: 41.30-41.40; WNW: 41.40-41.50; ENE: 41.50-42.00; WNW: 42.00-42.10; ENE: 42.10-42.20; WNW: 42.20-42.30; ENE: 42.30-42.40; WNW: 42.40-42.50; ENE: 42.50-43.00; WNW: 43.00-43.10; ENE: 43.10-43.20; WNW: 43.20-43.30; ENE: 43.30-43.40; WNW: 43.40-43.50; ENE: 43.50-44.00; WNW: 44.00-44.10; ENE: 44.10-44.20; WNW: 44.20-44.30; ENE: 44.30-44.40; WNW: 44.40-44.50; ENE: 44.50-45.00; WNW: 45.00-45.10; ENE: 45.10-45.20; WNW: 45.20-45.30; ENE: 45.30-45.40; WNW: 45.40-45.50; ENE: 45.50-46.00; WNW: 46.00-46.10; ENE: 46.10-46.20; WNW: 46.20-46.30; ENE: 46.30-46.40; WNW: 46.40-46.50; ENE: 46.50-47.00; WNW: 47.00-47.10; ENE: 47.10-47.20; WNW: 47.20-47.30; ENE: 47.30-47.40; WNW: 47.40-47.50; ENE: 47.50-48.00; WNW: 48.00-48.10; ENE: 48.10-48.20; WNW: 48.20-48.30; ENE: 48.30-48.40; WNW: 48.40-48.50; ENE: 48.50-49.00; WNW: 49.00-49.10; ENE: 49.10-49.20; WNW: 49.20-49.30; ENE: 49.30-49.40; WNW: 49.40-